Psychology (Applied)

Searching the Literature in Psychology

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Aims

To help you build up your information research skills, this workbook aims to:

• help you to create an effective literature search strategy
• help you use that strategy in conducting keyword searches in Discover for your chosen topic
• give you practical experience of using your strategy to search bibliographic resources such as PsycINFO and Web of Science
• introduce you to a range of additional online resources for your subject
• enable you to access resources from a variety of sources

Getting Help

If you require further help and advice after this session please contact your Academic Liaison Librarian: Mrs Heather Robb

E-Mail: heather.robb@durham.ac.uk
Phone: 0191 3340276 (internal: 40276) - Queen’s Campus Library, or 0191 3341585 (internal: 41585) - Bill Bryson Library
How to create an effective search strategy

Creating an effective search strategy will help to ensure that you find relevant information for your research. A strategy can be applied to any search tool and is particularly helpful when searching large online resources, such as PsycINFO, Discover and Google Scholar.

A search strategy will help if you get either too many results or too few. Spending a few minutes thinking about your search topic, considering keywords and devising a strategy is guaranteed to improve the quality of the results that you find and could also save you a lot of time!

**How?**

Follow the steps described below and use the blank page opposite to create a strategy for your own choice of subject.

1. Think about your search topic as a question or series of questions.
2. Write down one of these questions and underline the key words or phrase(s).
3. Create a list of synonyms for each word that you have underlined (see example below).
4. Use the truncation and wildcard symbols to increase the number of results in a keyword search:
   - the truncation symbol (often *) to search for the variant endings of a word stem e.g. child* finds child, children, children’s
   - the wildcard symbol (often ?) to replace any single letter e.g. wom?n finds woman or women
5. Combine your search terms using the Boolean Operators OR / AND.
   - OR finds references which contain either word e.g. teenager OR youth
   - AND combines terms e.g. perception AND colour

**EXAMPLE**

Question: Can we rely on eyewitness testimony?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords:</th>
<th>eyewitness*</th>
<th>AND</th>
<th>testimon*</th>
<th>AND</th>
<th>rely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synonyms:</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eye witness*</td>
<td>identif*</td>
<td>relia*b</td>
<td></td>
<td>accura*b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. When you have carried out an initial search you may be able to refine your strategy by incorporating terms that you find in relevant references in your results.
Tip
Remember, with keyword searching you are often relying on your search terms being included in just the title or abstract of the article. If you find a search gets no results try broadening it by reducing the number of concepts or specific terms in the search statement, or think of alternative terms.
Discover – keywords & Boolean operators

The Library’s Discover search engine enables you to search for books, journal articles, archives, objects from the University Museums, images, Durham research and more. It is freely available wherever you have internet access. Access it from the Library home page at www.durham.ac.uk/library. Alternatively, from the University’s home page click Student’s Gateway and then under the list of services choose Library.

Searching using keywords

Keyword searching is a feature of many databases (see below) and also internet search engines. You can often use brackets and Boolean operators to combine words from your search strategies.

1. First try entering two keywords from the box at the top of your search strategy grid. Note that Discover assumes AND between terms. See how many results you get e.g.

```
eyewitness* testimon*
```

Searching using Boolean operators

2. Now try using the Boolean operator OR to add words from your search strategy (don’t forget to use your truncation symbols). Note: you will need to use brackets to separate the individual search strings and any Boolean operators must be in capital letters e.g.

```
(eyewitness* OR eye witness*) (testimon* OR identif*)
```

Hopefully, this will have expanded your original set of results but probably to a very large number! An important part of searching is knowing how to refine your searches and in Discover you can do that by using the options on the left-hand side e.g. by subject or resource type such as peer-reviewed journal articles or books.

Using bibliographic databases

General search engines such as Discover and Google Scholar will often find large numbers of results and it is difficult to use a complex search strategy which targets the exact area needed. To search more specifically you will need to use subject specific bibliographic databases which index journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, and more.

The Library subscribes to a number of databases which can be accessed both on campus and, normally, from anywhere you have internet access.
Check out the list of databases by selecting the **Databases** link on the left-hand side of the Library homepage: [www.durham.ac.uk/library](http://www.durham.ac.uk/library). For this session you’ll be trying out searches on two major data sources, Web of Science and Ebsco, which each give access to relevant databases e.g. *Web of Science Core Collection*, *Medline* and *PsycINFO*. Use the database help screens to find search tips e.g. on using truncation, phrase searching or proximity searching.

Look out for the **ConneXions** links next to references which you can use to check for full-text access to articles. The Library does not subscribe to every journal or hold every book listed in these databases but you can use the Document Delivery Service to request them – see page 7 below.

**Searching PsycINFO & Web of Science**

**PsycINFO** (via Ebsco) covers the professional and academic literature in psychology and related disciplines. Its coverage is worldwide, and includes references and abstracts to over 1300 journals, and to book chapters and books.

The **Web of Science** service from Thomson Reuters provides access to the Web of Science Core Collection citation index databases covering Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities, and Science. It indexes over 12,000 journals. You can use the citation indexes to find out who has cited a journal article since it was published so you can track how research topics have moved forward over time.

Also included in *Web of Science* are book and conference proceedings indexes, *Medline* (a major biomedical database), *BIOSIS Citation Index* (life sciences), and *Zoological Record*. All these resources can be searched together under the All Databases search.

To help you use these resources effectively try out the online tutorials which you’ll find on the Psychology Information Skills training page for Psychology (Applied). From the Library home page click on the links:

**Subject Information | Psychology | Information Skills | Psychology (Applied)**

**Full-text databases – PsycARTICLES & ScienceDirect**

**PsycARTICLES** is a database of full-text articles from journals published by the American Psychological Association. Access it from the Library’s **Databases** page. All these journals are also included in PsycINFO but it can be useful if you just want some articles with full-text guaranteed.

**ScienceDirect** covers a range of subject disciplines including psychology. You can limit your search to “psychology” and to “subscribed sources” only which will give you access to the full-text of journals and books which the Library subscribes to via ScienceDirect.

**Warning!** Be aware that with both these resources, although you will get direct full-text access, your search is restricted to a limited number of publishers’ output and the coverage of the academic literature in psychology is not as comprehensive as that in PsycINFO.
**Additional Resources**

**Newspapers and online media resources**

From the Library homepage click:

**Services and Sites | Other Online resources | Newspapers, news services & archives**

**News from today's papers**

Access to today's news from a range of newspapers and news groups including: BBC, CNN, the *Guardian*, the *Times* & the *Washington Post*, etc.

**News monitoring services & archives**

Access to online newspaper archives including the *Times*, *Independent* and the *Guardian* etc. Also links to resources that provide the background behind the latest new stories and access to digitised footage from British cinema news reels dating from 1910-1983.

**Nexis UK**

One of the news monitoring services available. Enables you to cross search over a range of UK newspapers, (useful for comparing stories from the *Guardian*, *Daily Mail* and the *Sun*!)

**Gateways to news services**

There are a number of news gateways to choose from, some have the ability to cross-search stories across a range of newspaper titles both here and abroad.

**Internet Resources**

The Internet is obviously a very useful source of information, but with any of the big Internet search engines you run the risk of retrieving much that is irrelevant, trivial or simply too much wade through.

One option is Google Scholar ([http://scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com)) which searches in “academic” sources of information on the Internet. On University computers look out for the Durham ConneXions link next to references which lets you check Durham’s Library holdings to see if we have full-text available. You can use the “settings” option in Google Scholar to set up links to Durham University Library from your own computer.

Remember that in some search engines you can keep words together as a phrase search by enclosing them in quotation marks e.g. “learning styles”.
Accessing items not held at Queen’s

Inter-campus requests
Don’t forget that if you want to borrow a book from the Bill Bryson Library or other Durham based sections of the University Library you can use the link Request delivery to Durham or Queen’s Campus, (which you’ll see near the bottom of each book record in the Library Catalogue) to have it brought over to Queen’s Campus Library for you. You will receive email notification from the Library when it is available for you to borrow.

Document Delivery Service
The University Library offers a Document Delivery Service to provide access to items which it does not hold or subscribe to. All kinds of material, including books, theses, journals, articles and conference papers can be obtained from other libraries or document supply centres. The standard charge is £3.50 per item. For more information and access to the online request forms, go to the Library homepage and click Document Delivery Service from the links on the left-hand side.

Sconul Access Scheme
Members of Durham University have access to academic libraries across the UK and Ireland as part of an agreement called SCONUL Access. This means you could use another university’s research library or a local academic library in your home town in the UK during the vacation, for research and study.

You need to register via the Sconul Access website first. For more information from the Library homepage click: Services and Sites | Visiting other academic libraries
Developing a search strategy will help you to find the information you need and will add structure to your searching. Remember to follow the steps of the research process outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Steps</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decide on the scope of your research</strong></td>
<td>It's easy to get overloaded by the books, articles, web sites that you can find on a topic. Thinking in advance about the amount, type and currency of information that you need can help you to narrow down your results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How much background about a topic will you need to review?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are you interested in a global perspective, or only research about the UK?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Identify keywords which describe your topic – Create a Search Strategy!** | This will help to ensure that you don’t miss any relevant information when searching the Library Catalogue, Discover, and other online resources. |}
| • Check the definition of any words you’re not familiar with. |                                                                                                                                         |
| • Is the terminology different elsewhere, e.g. in the USA, or has it changed over time? |                                                                                                                                         |
| **Use the Library’s Discover**                                | Use the help screens for search options. These may give you an overview of the subject. These may give you a more detailed explanation of a topic. |
| • Try keyword searching to find other relevant items.         |                                                                                                                                         |
| • Dictionaries, encyclopaedias, companions and textbooks provide basic information. |                                                                                                                                 |
| • Books and journal articles provide more detailed information. |                                                                                                                                         |
| **Use bibliographic databases to find journal articles and more on your topic** | Journal articles are a valuable source of academic information. Use the help screens for search options. |
| **Search other resources**                                    | Beware of low-quality information: ensure that the websites and articles you access are provided by reputable sources. |
| • Try Google Scholar or subject gateways.                    |                                                                                                                                         |
| • If you use an internet search engine make sure you critically evaluate your results. |                                                                                                                                 |
| **Are you finding the information that you need?**            | Review the information that you’re finding: is it relevant and appropriate for your purpose? Do you need to revise your search?           |
| **Organise your references**                                  | This is essential so that you don’t waste time re-tracing your steps when compiling your bibliography. It will help you present your references clearly and consistently. |
| Use reference management software. EndNote can help you do this easily. See CIS Guide 92. Mendeley and Zotero are similar programs which are free to download. |                                                                                                                                 |
