Libraries and Learning Services

Academic articles for your assignment – Where to start

Student version

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the workshop you will be able to:

- Find full text scholarly or peer reviewed articles efficiently using the Library’s ‘Search Everything’ search and ‘Google Scholar’.

Please note that this workshop covers the ‘basics’ to get started. We recommend that Postgraduate students book a consultation with their subject librarian for more in-depth searching in subject databases. ([https://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/services/research-support/subject-librarians](https://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/services/research-support/subject-librarians))

Learning Support Services

Email: learningservices@auckland.ac.nz

Phone: 09- 373 7599 ext 83797/89744
Table of Contents

What are academic articles? ................................................................. 3
Understanding your topic ........................................................................ 3
Places to Search ..................................................................................... 4
Search Everything .................................................................................. 6
Search results ....................................................................................... 6
Adapt your search .................................................................................. 8
Google Scholar ..................................................................................... 10
Workshop summary quiz ....................................................................... 11
Extra for experts .................................................................................. 11
Other places to search for articles ....................................................... 11
Advanced searches ............................................................................... 12
Accessing Library databases .................................................................. 14
More information: Library workshops ............................................... 14
What are academic articles?

What are academic, scholarly or peer reviewed journal articles and where do you find them?
Watch the following video from RMIT for a concise overview –

**Scholarly** or **academic journals** are usually published by a university or institution and contain research or specific information. Popular magazines are usually commercial, written for a general audience and contain current news.

For a concise overview of the differences between scholarly and popular journals, have a look at the following guide: [http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/subject-guides/bus/topicguides/academic_popularjnls.htm](http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/subject-guides/bus/topicguides/academic_popularjnls.htm)

A **database** is a searchable collection of information. In libraries the most common databases are collections of newspaper, magazine and journal articles. Some databases may contain images, audio-visual materials, reports, theses and dissertations, e-books, statistical data etc.

Understanding your topic

**Interpreting the question and identifying key words**

Your first assignment/research is due but you are not sure that you understand the question.

**Where do you start?**

- Make sure that you clearly understand what you are being asked to do before you begin your assignment.

- Identify the **instruction words** and the **keywords** before you begin to search for articles or plan your answer. Consider rephrasing the assignment as a question.

**Keywords**

- These are important words that describe your topic

- A good key word enables you to search successfully for information
Use your own topic or try ONE of the search examples below when completing the activities throughout this handout:

**Arts/Humanities examples**

a) Is animal testing in research ethical? You must use recent articles (last 5 years) to support your argument.

OR

b) As part of your course work you are required to write a 2,000 word essay on the influence of peers on alcohol consumption amongst young people. The assignment requires you to find recent articles and use examples from New Zealand.

**Science/Engineering examples**

a) You are required to write a 1,500 word report on seismic activity and bridge safety. You must find 5 recent scholarly articles, including material relevant to NZ.

OR

b) You are required to write a 2,000 word assignment on how honeybees use the waggle dance to communicate information. You must use 5 recent scholarly articles.

**Business example**

a) You are required to write an assignment discussing corporate social responsibility. You must include examples of how this applies to specific organisations, either national or international

---

**Places to Search**

*Search Everything* on the main library page and *Google Scholar* are two great places to start searching for articles as they are easy to use. You can also search the Library *Catalogue* and *Library databases* for a more subject specific search.

*Search Everything* does a global search across all the library holdings and online information. The Search Everything box enables you to discover all sorts of content including articles, books, theses, streaming video, images and more. You can use the drop-down options within the search box for specific things such as Exam, TV and Radio etc.

*Catalogue:* The library catalogue search is limited to items that the library holds such as books and articles. This is a good place to go for a precision search.
Library databases hold a collection of information (usually journals) which focus on relevant subjects. Databases are a good place to do a focussed search on a topic. They also have advanced search options which enable you to more specific searches. Information on which databases are best for your subject area are found under subject guides on the main library page. First year students are unlikely to need to use them. They are essential for post graduate students.

**Google Scholar** searches across multiple databases at the same time to find ‘scholarly’ or ‘peer reviewed’ articles. A lot of articles which are held in the libraries databases also appear in Google Scholar. It will also pick up material which is freely available on the Internet.

If you use the ‘Search Everything’ box it will search across all the areas listed in the drop down box.

You can also do a more specific search by selecting one of the options in the drop down box.

Click here to access the Library catalogue.
Search Everything

This will search across the Library catalogue, Articles and more, exam papers, database connect pages, theses and the Libraries and Learning Services website.

Activity 1: Search for articles in ‘Search Everything’ using keywords from the topic you have selected.

1. How many results did you get? ..............................................................................

2. Which keywords did you type in? ..............................................................................

3. What sort of formats or types of results did you get (e.g. book)? ............................

4. How many article results did you get and how can you view and access them? ................

5. Look at the first page of article results. What is your initial impression? Are they relevant? ..............................................................

6. How do you quickly identify which articles from your results list are the most likely to be helpful?
   (List techniques that you might use to make this judgement below.)

7. Can you find any new words that are similar to your keywords as a result of this search that you might be able to use for another search? ..............................................................

Search results

Result Formats

When you search using a key word you will get results in different formats.
### Different text types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Books</strong></th>
<th>A published written work of fiction or nonfiction which can be a hard copy or digital in the form of an e-book.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Articles</strong></td>
<td>Articles are short pieces of written information on a topic. Scholarly articles are published in journals. They can be in hard copy or digital format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Databases</strong></td>
<td>A searchable collection of information. Libraries subscribe to a variety of databases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exams</strong></td>
<td>Past exam papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Journals</strong></td>
<td>A scholarly publication on a subject that contains peer reviewed articles written by experts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audio, video and images</strong></td>
<td>Images, maps, streaming audio and video.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TV and radio</strong></td>
<td>Results from the TV and radio database.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theses</strong></td>
<td>An in depth piece of written research on a topic by a university student completed as part of a Masters or Doctoral degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Our website</strong></td>
<td>All library website content – subject guides, help information. e.g inter library loans etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workshops</strong></td>
<td>Workshops and workshop information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Google Scholar</strong></td>
<td>Access Google Scholar and search for academic articles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Selecting the best articles

Often it can be hard to make a quick initial decision about which articles from your results might be the best articles. Different people have different techniques for doing this.

### Tips for finding the best articles

- Set limits by using the facets box to order articles by relevance or date.

- Quickly scan the article titles and description looking for key concepts and ideas and decide if this article is worth exploring further. Ask your self – **Do the title and description of this article seem similar to the essay question? Might this article be helpful?**

- Investigate further by quickly scanning the abstract of the article. Jot down the key ideas presented in the abstract or summarise the abstract in your own words. Ask yourself - **Is this information likely to help me answer the assignment question? Is it worth looking at this article in more detail?**

- Quickly skim through the first paragraphs of the article. Ask yourself – **Will this information help me answer the essay question? Does this article seem relevant?**
Adapt your search

If you are not successful on your first attempt you can adapt and change your search. Searching is an ongoing process of trial and error.

You can adapt your search by trying some of these Power searching techniques:

**Tips for getting better results: Power searching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s the Problem?</th>
<th>Which Power search technique helps?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too few results</td>
<td>Search using <strong>synonyms</strong> eg. teenagers, youth, adolescents, adolescence, young adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many results</td>
<td><strong>Remove concepts</strong> eg. Instead of: honeybees <strong>and</strong> dance <strong>and</strong> communicate Try: bees <strong>and</strong> dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results not</td>
<td><strong>Add concepts</strong> eg. Instead of: corporate <strong>and</strong> ethics Try: corporate <strong>and</strong> ethics <strong>and</strong> McDonald’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific enough</td>
<td><strong>Search for keywords in the title only</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Use broader terms</strong> eg. Instead of: drug addiction Try: addiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Apply limits</strong> eg. date, type of publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Try phrase searching</strong> eg. “binge drinking,” “social responsibility.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tips for finding synonyms**

- Find synonyms (words with a similar meaning) through brainstorming, thesaurus, course material and dictionaries

- You may find synonyms (new keywords) from your results as you search. You may find these in article titles and abstracts.

- **Subject headings** which are found in the catalogue description of an item are a good place to find additional synonyms and other articles on the same or similar topics. Subject headings are a list of topics which are assigned to a book or article in a catalogue record in order to group similar books or articles together.
Activity 3 – Modify your search

(Search individually or in pairs)

Pick two relevant search techniques from the table above and apply these to your search.

1. How did these affect your original search? ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. Which worked best? Why? ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

3. How did it change your results? ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Activity 4 – Search for articles using Google scholar

Part A: Library access to Google Scholar

1. How do you access Google Scholar through the Library main page?

Part B: Redo the same search you did in Search Everything Activity 2 or try your own topic.

1. How many results did you get?

2. How do the results compare to those found in Search Everything?

3. How could you modify or refine your search to get more/less/better results?

4. How can you access the full text articles?
Workshop summary quiz

How much have you remembered? See if you can answer the questions below to find out.

1. Keywords are important words that describe your topic and that you can use to conduct online searches. T/F
2. Scholarly journal articles are peer reviewed articles written by experts for experts focussing on a subject area or specific field of study. T/F
3. ‘Search everything’ on the main library page only searches for articles. T/F
4. Google Scholar is a good way to search the internet for ‘scholarly articles’. T/F
5. You don’t need a number of synonyms because just one or two keywords will probably find you all the information that you need.
6. You use power searching techniques to make your results list bigger or smaller. T/F
7. You can use the advanced search option in Google scholar or the library catalogue to do a more precise search. T/F
8. Subject guides can be used to access library databases on specific subjects. T/F

Extra for experts

Other places to search for articles

If your results were not satisfactory or you wished to do a more precise search you could search for articles in the library databases or in the Library Catalogue under ‘Articles and more’.

(Note: You may need to use the Advanced Search option for a more precise search. For example searching for a common title such as ‘The Economist.’)

Accessing Library databases and Articles and More

You can access ‘Databases’ by clicking on the arrow next to “Search Everything” to get a dropdown box.

You can access ‘Articles and more’ by clicking on the catalogue link.
Articles and more
You can search for articles by selecting ‘Articles and more’

![Image of the Library search interface with options for The Catalogue, Articles & more, and Exams.]

Library databases
You can search for articles in the library databases – browse databases by title, faculty, subject, or select from the ‘Popular databases’ list.

![Image of the Library search interface with options to browse databases by title, faculty, and subject.]

Click here to access the subject guides which will direct you to the best databases to use for your subject area.

Advanced searches
You can do an Advanced Search in the Library Catalogue or in Google Scholar.

Advanced search in the Library Catalogue
You can do this by clicking the advanced search option

![Image of the Library search interface with options for Library Search.]

Then use the advanced search option options to conduct a more precise search. Choose if you wish to Search ‘The Catalogue’ or ‘Articles & more’ by clicking on the relevant tab.
Advanced Search in Google Scholar

You can use the advanced search options to narrow your search.

Activity 4- Accessing Advanced Search options

1. How do you access Advanced Search in the library catalogue?

2. How do you access the Advanced Search options in Google Scholar?

Activity 5 - Search for Articles using Library Catalogue Advanced Search (Articles and more) and then Google Scholar Advanced Search.

Using your own topic or a topic from the list above do a search for articles Library Catalogue Advanced Search (Articles and more)

1. How many results did you get?

2. Use the advanced search option to modify your results.

3. Repeat your search in Google Scholar Advanced Search.

4. Use the advanced search options modify your search.

5. What are the advantages of using the Advanced Search options in the Library Catalogue and Google Scholar and when might you use them?
Accessing Library databases

The Library subscribes to databases which hold collections of e-journals. Subject guides show which databases are most relevant for your subject.

Activity 6 – Finding databases
1. How do you access the databases from the library main page?

2. Where do you find the subject guides for databases?

3. Name one database that is listed under the subject guide for your area of study.

More information: Library workshops

For more information on using Library systems and resources, attend Library workshops:

- **Uni IT Essentials**
  Computers, username, passwords, Internet, copying, printing

- **Find Course Readings and Exams**
  Locate your online course readings and past exam papers; find books and articles on your reading list; renew and request library items

- **Referencing: The basics**
  The fundamentals of referencing – what, why, when, how

Book at [www.library.auckland.ac.nz/workshops/](http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/workshops/)

If you need help

- Ask at for help in the general library at the enquiry desk, level G, Ext: 88044
- Click on Help at the top of the main library page and then click on an option from the pop up menu which will appear. (See below)