Finding Articles

Starting out
When beginning your research, it is important to have a topic in mind and be aware of what subject area that topic falls under. Even if you change your topic later, you need to have something to start out with.

Selecting a Database

The Medaille College Libraries subscribe to around 100 databases. You don’t have time to search every one of them, so how do you know which one to use?

Each database has its own strengths and weaknesses in different subject areas. There are some general databases as well, such as Ebsco Academic Search Elite. These general databases are good for preliminary research in almost any subject area, but are not well-suited to more in-depth research.

For more information on databases, see the Databases handout available on the Rochester Campus Library LibGuide (web address listed above). There are also two general LibGuides about databases available through the Medaille Libraries website: Database Favorites and Online Databases (Rochester). Visit libraryguides.medaille.edu and click “General Reference Guides” on the left to find these.

Using the LibGuides

The Medaille College librarians have created numerous LibGuides on specific subjects to help you select databases and find other resources in your subject area of interest.

From the libraries home page, go to the “Research Help” menu at the top and click “LibGuides.” From there, click on the “Subject Guides” tab and choose your subject area of interest. Each subject-specific LibGuide gives you information on which databases are best for searching in that subject area.

The databases are clickable from the LibGuides and will take you directly to your database of choice so you can begin searching for articles.

The Databases Tab

- Click the Databases tab on the Libraries home page
- Search by subject to find good databases for your subject of interest
- If you already know which database you want to use, click the starting letter or use the search box to find it quickly.
- Click “connect” next to the database you want, and type in your Medaille username and password.
Searching within a Database

- All databases look a little bit different, but have the same basic functionalities.

- Come up with different search terms to find articles that match your interests. It may help to perform multiple searches that have similar meanings (like cats, felines, mammals, pets).

- Some database companies like Ebsco own multiple databases and can search many at once. Look for a button that says something like “Choose Databases” to select many databases to search.

- Use limits (usually located beneath the search box) to limit your results in many different ways. In the image above you see check boxes to limit to “Full Text.” This ensures that you will be able to read the article right away on the computer.

- Use the “Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals” limit to ensure that all the articles retrieved in your search are peer-reviewed. Peer-Reviewed, Scholarly, and Refereed articles all mean the same thing. It means that the article has been put through a rigorous approval process whereby researchers and experts in the same field of research as the author have read the paper. These experts decide whether or not the article should be published based on the quality of the writing and the research.

- For more information on search strategies, see the Guide to Searching the Catalog handout (available on the Rochester Campus Library LibGuide) which outlines search strategies that are useful in databases as well.

The Journals Tab

- Searching for articles through the journal search can sometimes be a more effective way to find many articles matching your topic of interest.

- You can browse/search journal titles by subject or by title. You may be surprised to find out that there’s an entire journal devoted to your specific topic of interest.

- Each journal (depending on how long it has been established) will have hundreds or possibly thousands of articles devoted to that specific topic area.

- When searching/browsing journal titles, each will list what years of publication are available in full-text, and which databases offer those years.

- When you click on a database title, it will take you to that database’s page for that journal. You’ll see basic information about that journal, including whether or not it is peer-reviewed or scholarly. Scholarly generally means peer-reviewed. Try to avoid using trade journals, as these are generally not peer-reviewed.

- The issues for that journal will be organized by year and month. When you click on an issue you’ll see a list of articles that appeared in that issue.

- There should also be an option to search within that journal (usually a search box or a link that says “Search within this publication”).

To learn more about the peer review process, watch this online video, Peer Review in Five Minutes: https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/tutorials/pr/