Search Strategies

You can create a successful search strategy (develop a keyword statement) and use it to search SteenFind, the Internet, or the library’s databases.

1. Write your topic as a question to focus it.
2. Circle or underline the keywords (main terms). For example:

   “What programs exist for adolescent substance abusers in rural East Texas?“

3. Use synonyms for your keywords.
4. Combine keywords using Boolean (AND, OR), nesting (use of parentheses), and phrase searching (use of quotation marks). For example:

   programs AND (adolescent OR teen) AND “substance abuse” AND rural Texas

Electronic Databases

There are many to choose from, so use our Subject Guides or ask a librarian. The Subject Guides are listed under the Research tab on the library’s homepage.

Academic Search Complete is a General Database that locates magazine, journal, and newspaper articles. Try your search strategy to see what is there. Many are in full-text format.

Electronic Databases

Tames the Internet by limiting search results to scholarly material (i.e. peer-reviewed articles, etc.). To use it, go to any of the Subject Guide pages and click on it under the General Databases heading. That way, there will be links to the full-text of the articles to which the Steen Library has access.

Dissertations and Theses

Doctoral Dissertations and Master’s Theses are usually extensive, original research projects with lengthy and useful Works Cited lists. The Dissertations & Theses database is a great finding tool for them.

At any time, feel free to:

- Call Kayce Halstead at 468-1574 or email at: khalstea@sfasu.edu
- Drop in a librarian’s office on the 2nd floor (202A)
- Make an appointment for an individual research consultation

(kch/2015)
What’s a Peer-Reviewed Journal Article?

Peer review is a process that journals use to ensure the articles they publish represent the best scholarship currently available. When an article is submitted to a peer-review journal, the editors send it out to other scholars in the same field to critically assess the quality of the scholarship, its relevance to the field, methodology and research design and its appropriateness for the journal. Usually the process is a blind review (the author’s name is not on the manuscript).

Publications that don’t use peer review (Time, Parents, Popular Science) just rely on the judgment of the editors as to whether an article is accurate. You can’t rely on them for solid scientific research.

How do I know if a journal is peer reviewed?

Usually you can tell just by looking. A scholarly journal is visibly different from popular magazines. If you have the actual journal in hand, check the front matter for a statement that the journal is “refereed” or “peer reviewed”. It is helpful to go to the journal’s website. Most journals that are peer reviewed will indicate if they are on their website. You can also check the title in ULRICHSWEB online database to verify that it is peer reviewed.

Finding Peer-Reviewed Journals and Journal Articles

There is not a comprehensive source for identifying all peer-reviewed journals. Most of the databases to which the library subscribes flag the peer-reviewed journals; however, they do not necessarily identify which of the articles is original research. The databases include editorials, meeting announcements, book reviews and even letters to the editor. None of these would qualify as a scholarly journal article.

What’s a “Research Article”?

When scientists and other scholars want to make the results of their work public, they usually begin by publishing them in a scholarly journal with a title like New England Journal of Medicine or Journal of Cell Biology.

What is and isn’t in a research article?

Research articles will usually contain:

- Summary or “abstract”
- Introduction or purpose or literature review
- Description of the research or methods or study design
- Statistical analysis of data
- Results
- Significance of the results or Conclusion
Research articles are not good places to find:

- Basic summaries
- General introductions to a topic
- Breaking news

They are the best way to access:

- The most recent, “cutting edge” research
- Authoritative information about older research

**Look for these points in the article abstract to let you know this is an original research article**

This study compared eight rural nursing homes (those located in centres with populations<15,000) that had created dementia Special Care Units (SCUs) to eight same-sized rural nursing homes that did not have SCUs. Outcomes were assessed in relation to residents, staff, family members, and the environment. In this paper we describe the overall study design and findings from the environmental assessment. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the SCU versus non-SCU environments on the nine dimensions of the Physical Environmental Assessment.

**What’s a "Review Article"?**

Not to be confused with a “peer-reviewed journal,” Review Articles are an attempt by one or more writers to sum up the current state of the research on a particular topic. Ideally, the writer searches for *everything* relevant to the topic, and then sorts it all out into a coherent view of the “state of the art” as it now stands. Review Articles will teach you about:

- prominent people working in a field
- major advances and discoveries
- current debates
- ideas of where research might go next

Review Articles are the best places to look if you want to find out what the key articles are for a given topic. If you thoroughly read a good review article, you should be able to “talk the talk” about a given topic. Unlike research articles, Review Articles are good places to get a basic idea about a topic.

Another type of Review Article is the annual review. These articles cover only the latest year. They cite and discuss the most important and relevant research published on the topic for the covered year. These articles are great for bringing you up to date on a topic, but they don’t take the place of the more thorough literature Review Articles.
Review Articles are examples of secondary research, while the original research articles are primary research. As an undergraduate, most of the research you do will be secondary research. As a graduate student you will culminate your study with a primary research study or thesis. You will begin that process with a thorough Literature Review.

So, how do I find Review Articles?

In some databases and indexes such as Medline and PubMed, you can limit your search to include only Review Articles (see illustration below). Agricola and PsycINFO use Literature Reviews as a subject descriptor. Descriptors are searchable indexing terms (see illustration at bottom of page). In other databases try adding the term review as one of your keywords.

Medline

Agricola

strategies. To inform management strategies for emergency epidemics such as FMD in wild pigs, there is scope to further develop and use models to explore a range of incursion scenarios and investigate the efficacy of different mitigation strategies.

Descriptors: disease control; epidemiological studies; population density; population ecology; geospatial science and technology; literature reviews; simulation models; disease reservoirs; animal ecology; swine; feral animals; wild boars; Sus scrofa; wildlife diseases; disease transmission; foot-and-mouth disease; Foot-and-mouth disease virus

Genre: Internet resource

Language: English


Digital Commons Network (open access)

UlrichsWeb Directory of Periodicals