Humanities Databases

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WHY?

The Library provides resources desired by your professors and relevant to your research. The Library provides access to quality resources not available through Google and other search engines (e.g. Books, scholarly/peer-reviewed articles).
Your Search approach

- **Plan** (think of alternatives for your search terms)
- **Know where to look** (different databases for different purposes)
- **Refine and Rework** your search (sometimes based on what you find as relevant sources)
Which databases
Specialized databases / primary sources
Searching options

**Library Catalog**
- Good for searching books
- Searches across databases and other resources

**Indexing & Abstracting databases**
- More focused searching (discipline-specific)
- Includes journal articles, book reviews, some e-books, and primary source material (limited)

**Specialized databases & Primary sources**
- Often specific to theme, time period, contain unique, non-published materials
# Databases across the disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>English</strong></th>
<th><strong>History</strong></th>
<th><strong>Philosophy</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>America History &amp; Life (North America)</td>
<td>Philosopher’s Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bibliography of English Language &amp; Literature</td>
<td>Historical Abstracts</td>
<td>PhilPapers</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLA International Bibliography</td>
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Cross-disciplinary: JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, Digital Dissertations
Accessing databases
3 ways:

1. Through your subject guide.
2. Searching for the database by name.
3. Through the library homepage (by searching by article)
Finding your subject guide

1. Go to Library home page (http://dal.ca/library)
2. Click “Subject Guides” from top menu
3. Search or Browse for an appropriate subject guide
Try it out!

Using the methods just described, find an appropriate database for your subject area.
Planning your search

1. Break it up (searching using keywords not phrases)
2. Think of alternatives
3. Search in specific fields (e.g. title, abstract)
4. Broaden or limit your search (depending on your search results)
Plan your search

Research Topic:
Gender roles in Shakespeare’s plays.

Research Question:
How were gender roles depicted differently in Shakespeare’s plays?
Identify keywords

Shakespeare  Gender roles  Plays
William  Gender  Drama (too broad)
Shakespeare  Masculinity  As you like it
Femininity  Twelfth Night

Hints:
- Use a thesaurus or subject headings to identify different keywords that could be used.

Look at the abstracts or descriptions in books or articles on the topic and see what terms the author uses.
Not getting results

Try different variations of the search terms

Try fewer search terms (sometimes less is more)
Entering your keywords

Use different fields provided

Select the field that you wish to search (e.g. Title and Abstract)

Use AND, OR, NOT options appropriately
AND, OR, NOT

AND = Search both keywords/phrases

OR = Search for one keywords/phrases

Example: Shakespeare AND Gender OR Feminism

NOT = exclude keywords/phrases

Example: Shakespeare AND Gender NOT Othello
Word variation

- “*” -- use an asterisk after a word to catch different word variations
  E.g. “Shakespear* - Shakespeare, Shakespearian

Be careful because you might include unintended words as part of this: e.g. “Germ*” vs. “German*” = Germans, Germany.”
Proximity & Wildcard operators

- “*” -- use n# to find words within close proximity to one another
  E.g. “Shakespeare n2 gender”
  (note: different databases use different conventions for this)

Use “?” to find variations on letter.
E.g. wom?n will find “women” and woman”
Controlled vocabularies

- Use of more formal terms that resources are filed under.

- Called different things in different databases (e.g. Thesaurus in MLA, Indexes in Historical abstracts)
Limiting your search results

- Limit by certain criteria:
  - Type (e.g. scholarly, peer-reviewed)
  - Date
  - Source-type
  - Language
Exercise
Additional tips

- Look in the sources of your relevant sources and search for them (by title)
- If the full-text is not available look in the sources of your relevant sources and search for them (by title)
  - Use the “Get it at Dal” button (if available to get the resource from another database)
Additional features

- Article tools (permalinks, citation examples.)
- Searching across databases
- References
Getting help

- Using the library
- LiveHelp
- Killam reference desk
- Your liaison librarians
Thanks!

Any questions?

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