Information & Research Skills:
How to Research Your Assignment
SMLLC Undergraduates

www.rhul.ac.uk/library
Aims of the Session

One of the keys to successful study is the ability to identify and exploit the resources available in our library and online. This course will explore:

- How to plan a literature search
- How to use LibrarySearch to find information from a range of sources
- How to identify databases specific to your subject
- Accessing electronic resources off-campus
- Using Senate House Library & how to identify other libraries available to you through the SCONUL Access Scheme
- **NOTE**: for information on how to find items on your Reading Lists, please see Appendix I & II at the end of this guide book.

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2. Planning a literature search
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   2.2 Using LibrarySearch to Find Book and E-books
   2.3 Using LibrarySearch to Find Journal Articles
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3. Off-Campus Access
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Appendix I – Finding material on your Reading Lists
Appendix II – using LibrarySearch’s features & functions
1. Introduction to the Information Research Process

Finding high quality information will help you to produce a good assignment. Efficient information handling skills will enable you to produce better coursework, give you more confidence when researching projects and impress your tutor!

Finding information can be daunting; you must be aware of the key information resources available to you and learn how to use them effectively. The aim is for you to spend more time working on your assignment and less time searching up blind alleys.

![Why is it so important? Can’t I just use Google?]

Using internet search engines is perfect for hobbies and interests. However, Google is not the best place to find information to support academic work. General search engines do not exert any quality control over the results they give you. Remember: anyone can publish anything on the web. There is a lot of sub-standard material out there as you have no doubt discovered.

Your tutors expect you to use high quality information sources i.e. material written by authoritative named individuals or responsible organisations. We are not ruling out the use of Google – but simply saying there may be better places for you to look.

2. Planning a Literature Search

You should carry out your search in a logical sequence. To get the best results, follow the step by step instructions below.

**Step 1: Textbooks and Reference Works**

![Why use reference sources?]

**Why use reference sources?**

*To give you a basic overview and grasp of a topic and to familiarise yourself with its structure and terminology. Even in the electronic age, print resources such as the high quality textbooks which you will find in the libraries provide ideal background material for your coursework.*

Your reading list will give you references to books which may help you with your assignment. You may find that you need to read material that is not on your reading list, either because the books listed are out on loan to other students, or because you want to read more widely on your area of interest. **Use LibrarySearch to find additional titles.** All textbooks and reference books have detailed contents pages and indexes. Use these to find the information that you need. Information in textbooks and reference books will provide an overview, ensuring that you understand the structure and terminology of your topic before you search for journal literature. You may also want to consult a dictionary for basic definitions.
Step 2: Finding Journal Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why should I use journal articles?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are two approaches to finding journal articles on your topic:

- Using **LibrarySearch**
- Searching bibliographic databases

**LibrarySearch**

Use **LibrarySearch** to produce a list of journal articles relevant to your subject. **LibrarySearch** streamlines your research process by enabling you to search across many of our electronic resources and the library catalogue, all from one search box. So you can use **LibrarySearch**, to quickly and easily search for print and electronic books, electronic journal articles, newspapers, theses, media and more.

**E-resources (online resources / databases)**

If you can’t find what you need in **LibrarySearch** try searching an e-resource. The library has many different online resources. Some are databases that focus on a subject like Modern Languages. Some have research from particular countries. Some have historic information and some just have current research. A successful eresource search will produce a list of journal articles or other material relevant to your subject. In many cases there will be a direct link to the full text but some records will simply give you an abstract (summary) and details of which journal, year and volume you need to check.

Some databases show other types of publications like newspaper articles or images. You’ve just got to find the right database for you topic. To see which databases are most relevant to your subject have a look at the ‘Subject Guides’ pages on the library website

[http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/modernlanguages](http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/modernlanguages)

You can improve your chances of finding the information you need if you think about the best keywords and search terms to use before starting your search.

This is known as developing a ‘search strategy'
2.1 Planning a Search Strategy

Analysing the question / topic

What exactly is the topic you are searching for?

Example: “In the avant-garde films of the 1920s, everything we see, including the human being, is subservient to rhythm & movement.” Discuss.

Look carefully at your essay title, and identify the key areas on which your essay will focus. First, try to pick out the keywords in your title and make a note of them.

What are the main concepts or keywords for your topic?

Example: avant-garde films / 1920s / what we see on film / rhythm and movement

Establishing the keywords means that you can ignore words which don’t add to the meaning of your topic, for example words like discuss, what or in.

Once you have identified your keywords think of alternative words that describe each of these concepts. Think of synonyms, acronyms, abbreviations, plurals and related terms. Use reference works to check for alternative terms and to check the relationship between different terms.

Are there any similar words that describe each of these concepts?

Example: art films, experimental films / early 20th Century, pre-war / Mise-en-scène, frame, screen, represented / Pace, flow, editing

You can combine keywords together using “operators” or linking words. The two most common are AND / OR

How might you combine these keywords together to search?

Example:

Avant-garde OR experimental would return results containing either the term ‘avant-garde’ or the term ‘experimental’

Avant-garde AND films would return results containing both terms

Use these keywords to search for books, journals and other material using the LibrarySearch or eresources relevant to your subject area.

SEE APPENDIX 3 FOR A USEFUL SEARCH PLANNING TEMPLATE
2.1.1 Phrase searching

Use to: make your search more specific

Phrase searching is a technique that narrows your search down by searching for an exact phrase. It is also useful when searching for a title or a quotation. Usually speech marks are used to connect the words together.

Example: “French New Wave” or “À la recherche du temps perdu”

NB: Some search tools may use (brackets) or ‘single quote marks’ rather than speech marks so check the online help.

2.1.2 How combining terms in a search works

Example 1. Searching for: Avant-garde OR experimental

- Results containing AVANT-GARDE
- Results containing BOTH TERMS
- Results containing EXPERIMENTAL

Using OR

Example 2. Searching for Avant-garde AND film

- Results containing AVANT-GARDE
- Results containing BOTH TERMS
- Results containing FILM

Using AND
2.2 Using LibrarySearch to Find Books and E-books

You can search LibrarySearch at http://librarysearch.rhul.ac.uk/

You can also search LibrarySearch from the library homepage

Use the search box for your initial search and then refine your results using the options on the results page.

Searching for a print book

- Type your keywords into the search box, e.g. “French New Wave”
- Limit your results to library items by selecting the Books, Music & Films tab
- Limit your results to print books only by selecting Available in RHUL Library in the Show only box
- Click on ‘Locations’ under the title to view full holdings information

Searching for an e-book

Electronic books (e-books) are digital versions of printed books, which can be accessed online. The library has a growing e-book collection which includes popular course reading and reference works such as dictionaries and encyclopaedias.

- In the Books, Music & Films tab type your keywords into the search box, e.g. French New Wave
- Limit your results to e-books by selecting Full text online (and refine to books if showing other formats)
- Click on view online to link to the e-book
- You may be prompted to login with your Royal Holloway login and password

2.3 Using LibrarySearch to Find Journal Articles

The following example shows you how to find journal articles in LibrarySearch on a specific topic

- Select the ALL tab
- Type your keywords into the search box, e.g. avant-garde AND French AND film
- Limit your results to Full text online and peer-reviewed articles
- Click on the title to view the article summary.
Click on View Online to check for access to the full text.
You can search for other publications by an author by clicking on the Author’s name
Select e-Shelf to save an item
Click on My Account to view the items in your favourites. You can then email your references to yourself, print a list of your saved references or export them to reference management software such as RefWorks

Exercise 1: Write down your topic then spend 5 minutes discussing and planning some keywords on your chosen subject area.

Keywords:
Exercise 2: Use LibrarySearch to find information on the topic using your chosen keywords

1) Write down the search terms you used and how many results you found?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Terms</th>
<th>No. of results</th>
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See if you can limit your search to articles which have the full text only

2) Limit your search to journal articles published in the last 5 years, how many results did you find?

3) Write down details (author, article title, source, date) of two useful/relevant articles you have found and whether or not the full text is available?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Full text available? Yes / No</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Full text available? Yes / No</th>
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4) Finally: save the two useful articles and email them to yourself
2.4 Finding E-resources Specific to Your Subject

If you are unable to find the information you need in LibrarySearch you may want to try searching one of the subject-specific e-resources such as the MLA International Bibliography. The library subscribes to a range of subject related and multidisciplinary databases from the UK and worldwide. As well as journal articles you can access a wide variety of information including primary sources, newspaper archives, sound and media recordings, images, historical documents and more.

To find E-resources specific to your subject:

- Go to the library home page [www.rhul.ac.uk/library](http://www.rhul.ac.uk/library)
- Click on Subject Guides from the left-hand menu
- Or go direct to: [http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/](http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/)

![Subject Guides](image)

The databases are listed by A-Z list or click on your subject area and then the E-resource tab. The subject pages also list the e-resources by type. Each e-resource has a brief description.

Databases from different suppliers or publishers will have different interfaces but the functions offered will tend to be the same. Each database will normally offer help screens to enable you to familiarise yourself with the features of that particular database.

NOTE: with some eresources, you may need to click on the Find It button in order to link to the online full text or find out if we have it in print in the Library.
Example of a SMLLC eresource: MLA International Bibliography

MLA International Bibliography provides a detailed searchable collection of journal articles, books and dissertations. Produced by the Modern Language Association, the online version of the bibliography dates back to the 1920's and contains over 2.3 million citations from more than 4,400 journals and series and 1,000 book publishers.

You can search by keywords and you can then ‘refine’ or limit your search using the options on the left-hand menus (including date of publication & subject options) and you can also limit your search to just research articles.

In many cases you will be provided with the full text of an article. However, in some cases you may have to click on the Find It button to link check to see if RHUL has access to the full text online or in print.
3. Off Campus Access

There are two ways in which you can access online resources subscribed to by Royal Holloway Library while away from campus.

3.1 Royal Holloway Virtual Private Network Service (Campus Anywhere)

If you are on campus you will not need to log in to access most of our electronic resources.

The only way to access all of our electronic resources off campus is to install the Virtual Private Network (VPN) service, also known as ‘CampusAnywhere’. The VPN Service sets up a secure connection between your computer at home and the College network. Using this connection you can access the library’s electronic journals and databases as well as other College services, such as your Y Drive, the College Intranet and other restricted websites. Your computer is given the appearance of being part of the Royal Holloway Campus network.

For details on how to set up the VPN connection go to the Computer Centre homepage at: http://www.rhul.ac.uk/it/home.aspx and follow the link: CampusAnywhere

3.2 Login with your College username and password

You can log into most of our e-resources with your College username and password. Search for the database or journal you wish to access and click on the link. You will be prompted to enter a username and password. Some resources will require you to login to Athens first and this will be indicated in the Access links information.

Further information on off-campus access can be found on our website http://www.rhul.ac.uk/library/helpandsupport/offcampusaccess/offcampusaccess.aspx

4. Using Other Libraries

As a Royal Holloway student you are entitled to access other university libraries in the UK. We always recommend checking the relevant online catalogue before you visit and contacting the Library beforehand if you want to access a specific item.

Senate House Library, the central University of London Library, is another important resource that enables Royal Holloway students and staff to be members and apply for a library card. As a member of Senate House Library you will be able to borrow material from the library and access electronic resources including e-journals and databases. Further information about membership can be found on their web site http://www.shl.lon.ac.uk/library/membership.shtml. You also can register remotely, and gain a login to access their electronic resources, click on the Beyond RHUL tab on the Library Subject Guide for Modern Languages: http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/modernlanguages.

You can join the SCONUL Access Scheme free of charge if you need to use another University library. All member libraries will permit you reference access, including reading and making photocopies of journal papers. Postgraduate and part-time students are also able to gain borrowing rights from many of the libraries participating in the scheme.

You can apply for SCONUL Access of a library via the SCONUL Access web site: http://www.access.sconul.ac.uk/
5. Citation and referencing

When researching your subject it is vital that you maintain an accurate record from the start of any sources you may have consulted and cited in your work. This ensures ethical use of the work in:

- Acknowledging the original author
- Enabling the item to be traced by others
- Providing evidence of the scope and depth of your research.

You dissertation supervisor or departmental handbook can offer guidance on what citation style is required for the piece of work you are doing. Internet material needs to be referenced just the same as that derived from printed sources.

5.1 Managing your references using RefWorks

RefWorks is an online bibliographic management programme which enables you to capture, save and organise references into your own personal database. As a member of RHUL you can access it via Eresources A-Z list. It enables you to:

- Capture and save references generated from online databases
- Automatically generate a bibliography in your document
- Insert citations directly into your research (i.e. word document)
- Format your references in a wide range of citation styles

RefWorks includes a comprehensive set of online self-help tutorials, or you may wish to sign up for the one of the RefWorks sessions that the Library regularly runs.

For available training sessions, please see the Information Skills sessions under the ‘Training’ section on the Library subject page for Modern Languages / SMLLC.

6. Further help & Contact details

If you would like more help or guidance on any of the topics explored in this course at any time during your research, please contact the Library Information Consultant for SMLLC:

Russell Burke, Russell.Burke@rhul.ac.uk

or email: library@rhul.ac.uk

Further information can also be found on the Library website:

http://rhul.ac.uk/library/

And for information relating to Library Services for Modern Languages:

http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/modernlanguages
Appendix I: Library Search Tutorials

Finding items on your reading list using Library Search

Library Search is available online and can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection. You can access it from the library home page: http://www.rhul.ac.uk/library

2.1 Searching for a book

Scan this code to watch a video tutorial on searching for a book!
Or go to this URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFBqhLg61cc

2.2 Searching for an e-book

Electronic books (e-books) are digital versions of printed books, which can be accessed online. The library has a growing e-book collection which includes popular course reading and reference works such as dictionaries and encyclopaedias.

Scan this code to watch a video tutorial on searching for an e-book!
Or go to this URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXrhB6L5D6c
2.3 Searching for a journal

To find journals you have three options:

**Option 1 - E-journals A-Z** links to an alphabetical list of electronic journal titles (this won’t include journals held in print)

Scan this code to watch a video tutorial on using the E-journals A-Z. Or go to this URL: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwmAFrxE2EY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwmAFrxE2EY)

**Option 2 - Journal Title search:** search for a journal by title in the main search box. On the LibrarySearch screen click the Journals by Title tab to only see Journals.

Scan this code to watch a video tutorial on using searching LibrarySearch by Journal Title. Or go to this URL: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBw2MRzgfUA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBw2MRzgfUA)

*Please note: Not all links will provide the full text of a specific article.* Your options will vary depending upon our subscription.

**Option 3 – Article Title Search:** search for a journal article by its title in the main search box.


- Click **All** to view all kinds of items.
- Use the limiters to **Show Only Peer-reviews Journals**
- Look for **Full Text Available**
- Click **View Online** and follow the link to the journal article page
1. **Narrow your search.** Use the search tabs to search either **All** collections (online, print, from databases, held in the library), **Books, Music and Film** collections (print, CD, or DVD only), or **Journals by Title** (print and online).

2. **Show only.** Limit your results to **Peer-reviewed Journals** in print or online, or articles with **Full Text Online**.

3. **Resource Type.** Limit your results by the type of item e.g. books, journals, dissertations, exam papers

4. **Subject.** Refine your search by subject terms.

5. **Date.** Select a date range to narrow to items published within that range.

6. **Sort your results by relevance**, newest or oldest publication date first, author, or title.

7. **Send to.** Save, email or export your results to reference manager software

8. **View Online.** Check for availability of full text.

9. **Details.** Shows further information on the item.

10. Check whether the book is in stock by looking under **Location**
Advanced Search

Use the advanced search to:

- Find journal articles by a specific author
- Search for journal or newspaper articles within a specific publication
- Find an article using incomplete information (e.g. you may not know the article's title but just know the author and the publication).
- Search for words just within the title of a journal article
- Specify the exact publication dates.

Appendix III: Search Planning Template

The following example shows how our earlier example sentence has been broken down into keywords and grouped by concept. It shows how they relate to one another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept 1</th>
<th>Concept 2</th>
<th>Concept 3</th>
<th>Concept 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French avant-garde films</td>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>What we see on film</td>
<td>Rhythm and movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental films</td>
<td>Early 20th Century</td>
<td>Mise-en-scène</td>
<td>Pace and flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art films</td>
<td>Pre-war</td>
<td>Represented on screen</td>
<td>Editing and structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the page is a blank template that you can use to plan your searches.
Write down the title of your essay or the subject of your topic

_____________________________________________________________________________

List the concepts using keywords and underneath each concept list other keywords that could be used to describe each concept

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept 1</th>
<th>AND</th>
<th>Concept 2</th>
<th>AND</th>
<th>Concept 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limits

Dates

Language

Type of publication

Think about other ways you could limit your search

You might find too many references on your topic, so think about ways you could limit your search. Most databases will also allow you to limit your search in these ways:

- **date** – do you only want items published after a certain date?
- **language** – do you only want references in English?
- **geography** – do you want information about a specific place or published in a particular country?
- **type of publication** – do you only want references to journal articles, books, or theses, for example. This might influence your choice of database.