Library & Information Training for Geographers:

Advanced Research Skills for Projects and Dissertations

Autumn 2016

www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library
www.libguides.rhul.ac.uk/Geography
1. Planning Your Literature Search

Once you have decided on your dissertation project topic you will need to carry out a literature search. A literature search is a detailed and organised step by step search for all the material available on a topic. Effective literature searching requires a strategic approach.

1.1 Identifying Keywords

Before you begin searching, think about the words you need to use in your search. Spending five minutes at the start and being systematic and organized will save you having to re-run searches with words you've forgotten to use.

**Step 1: Write our your search as a sentence**

Here is an example topic written out as a sentence:

*What are the causes of coastal erosion?*

**Step 2: Identify the important words/concepts**

Translate your sentence into keywords. As these databases will search for exactly what you type in, you need to consider the following:

- synonyms - these are different words with the same meaning e.g. *policy* and *procedure* - not all words have these but if they do they should be included in your list of keywords
- acronyms - this is where your keywords can be condensed into a set of capital letters e.g. *GPS* is *Global Positioning System* - use both the full term and the acronym when searching
- alternative spellings - remember to try UK and US spellings for example *organisation* and *organization*
- alternative and related terms
- international terms
- former terms (e.g. non pc versions) – *global warming* and *climate change*
- changes of place name
- broader and narrower terms - you must be sure your results will be pitched at the right level and broader terms can retrieve very general results while narrow terms may be too specific

Additionally, a lot of databases provide a thesaurus of keywords, which is used to classify the work held in the database. Use this helpful tool if possible, as it provides consistency when searching.

If you don't do this you might not find the most relevant articles.

The following example shows how our 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>causes OR factors</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>AND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coasts</td>
<td>erosion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coastline</td>
<td>shrinkage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>beaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 3: Think about 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.

Exercise 1: Think about an essay topic and plan your search

**Topic**

___________________________________________________________

**Keywords and concepts**

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

**Limits**

**Dates** ___________________________________________________________

**Language** _______________________________________________________

**Type of publication** _____________________________________________
2. Developing a Search Strategy – selecting resources

2.1 Identifying suitable resources

Once you have identified your keywords you then need to identify which tools and online resources would be best suited for your research and where to find these resources. The Library homepage http://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library provides a good starting point for using all types of Library resources, as it provides a link to LibrarySearch, e-journals, databases and other online resources.

You should also use the Library Subject Pages as these provide information about subject specific library services and links to resources relevant to your area of research. To find the Subject Page for your department go to the Library homepage www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library then click on ‘Your subjects’ on the left hand menu and select your department.

Exercise 2: Spend 2-3 minutes noting down which resources or types of resources you think you would use to carry out your research

There are a number of highly effective search tools available to enable you to locate information on a topic or specific works by an organisation or author. These include:

- Library Search
- Online databases
- Internet search engines (e.g. BASE, Google Scholar)

3. Using LibrarySearch

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

Using LibrarySearch you can:

- Find a specific book or journal
- Find e-books and e-journals
- Find DVDs, videos and CDs
- Search by author’s name, book or journal title or by subject
- Check availability of titles on a reading list
- Renew items out on loan to you to avoid paying fines
- Request items that are on loan to another user
- Reserve Short Loan items for specific day and time
3.1 Searching for a book

Type two or three keywords into the Search for box e.g. the author’s surname and words from the title of the book, then click Go.

The following example shows how to use the general search to locate the book below:


- Type *The universities we need* into the search box
- Click Search
- Click Get It for brief details (i.e. loan period, due date and time, library, shelf location / classmark)

The Shelf Location

The Shelf Location (also known as “classmark”) is very important. It groups together books on a related subject and also indicates where a book is located on the shelves.

Bedford and Founder’s Libraries use *Dewey Decimal Classification System* (a decimal number is followed by the first three letters of either the author’s name or occasionally the title), e.g. 378.42 BLA

3.2 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 encyclopedias. You can search for ebooks in LibrarySearch.

The following example shows how to use Electronic Book Search to locate the book below:


- Type some keywords into the search box and click go. Good keywords are usually the author’s surname and / or words from the book title, e.g. *Goddard staging*.
- Click on the Books, Music and Films tab at the top of the page.
- Select Full Text Online from the left hand side
- Click on the View It link button [you may be asked to enter your College computer username and password] which opens a pop-up window containing several links. Click on the link to access the full text. This will open the e-book in a new window.
3.3 Searching for a journal

a) If you are looking for a specific article, such as the one in the example below, you would:

- Use the All tab and search for the article title
- Click on View It which will show access options


b) When looking for articles using keywords, the All tab defaults to what is available via our online subscriptions. To view things we perhaps only hold in print, or don’t subscribe to, tick the box to “search beyond RHUL’s Collections”.

If you find something we don’t hold the full text to, follow these steps:

- Search for the journal title in the “Journals by Title” tab, as we may hold the physical copy
- Search for the journal title at Senate House Library
- If you are unable to access it via Royal Holloway or SHL, consider requesting an Inter-Library Loan [https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library/usingourlibraries/interlibraryloans.aspx](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library/usingourlibraries/interlibraryloans.aspx)

3.4 Online Databases

There are a large number of databases that can be searched to locate information on a topic, or works by a particular organisation or author.

Databases may contain references to journal articles, reports, conference papers, book chapters, published and unpublished papers, theses or statistical or financial data. The library subscribes to a range of subject related and multidisciplinary databases from the UK and worldwide.

**Database Types**

There are two general types of databases:

- Bibliographic citation and/or abstract databases
- Full text

Some databases will contain a mixture of citation and full text results.

**Citation and/or abstract database**

A citation database is an electronic index to published and unpublished information. Citation databases include citations (that is, a bibliographic reference) and sometimes also brief summaries or abstracts.

**Abstract**

An abstract provides a brief summary of the overall article. Reading the abstract can be a good way to find out whether it is worth reading the full article.

**e.g. Web of Science** is one of the key abstract databases

**Full text databases**

A full text database includes the full text of the articles as well as the reference or citation.

**e.g.**

- JSTOR
- GeoRef
4. Developing a Search Strategy – building your search

4.1 Developing your search

Once you have identified your resources you then need to develop a search strategy. This section describes some important methods you can use to search efficiently and effectively. Guidance is provided on:

- using symbols to search for alternative word endings and spellings
- combining your concepts in a search statement
- searching for phrases
- performing more specific searches

4.2 Truncation / wildcard searching

> Use to: widen your search and ensure you don’t miss relevant records

Most databases are not intelligent; they will just search for exactly what you type in. Truncation and wildcard symbols enable you to overcome this limitation. These search techniques retrieve information on similar words by replacing part of the word with a symbol usually a * or ?.

- In **truncation** the end of the word is replaced. For example `bio*` retrieves biology, biological, biosphere, biodegradable, and so on.
- In **wildcard** searching, single letters from inside the word are replaced with a symbol. For example `wom?n` will retrieve the terms woman and women.

**Please note!** Different databases use different symbols, so use the help option to check what is used.

4.3 Search operators

> Use to: combine your search words and include synonyms

Also know as Boolean operators, search operators allow you to join terms together, widen a search or exclude terms from your search results. This means you can be more precise in locating your information. Not all search tools support Boolean searching.

**AND** - Narrows your search by combining words. The results found must contain all the words which you have joined by using AND.

**OR** - Broadens your search to include resources which contain any or all of the terms connected by OR.

**NOT** - Narrows your search by excluding a term. Beware! By using this operator you might exclude relevant records because you will lose those records which include both words.

**Please note!** Check the online help screens for details of the search operators recognised by the database you are searching; some use symbols instead of words, e.g. + or &.
4.4 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 or sentence. It is particularly useful when searching for a title or a quotation. Usually speech marks are used to connect the words together. For example “coastal erosion” will find results which contain that phrase. Some search tools may use (brackets) or 'single quote marks' rather than speech marks so check the online help.

4.5 Creating search statements

> Use to: combine multiple search words

On most databases you can type in a search statement, this involves combining your search words using search operators. When creating a search statement you must use brackets to ensure correct processing of the search.

- Words representing the same concept should be bracketed and linked with ‘or’ e.g. (women or gender)
- Groups of bracketed terms can be linked with ‘and’ or ‘not’.

For example: (causes or factors) and (erosion or shrinkage) and coast*

4.6 Focusing a search by date, language or document type

There are many ways to focus your search and all search tools offer different ways of doing this. Check the help facilities if the options are not immediately obvious. Some of the ways of limiting your search are as follows:

- Date
- Language
- Place
- Publication type
- Age groups
- Type of material e.g. chapters in books, review articles, book reviews

Exercise 3: Go to your subject pages and select a database or use LibrarySearch and try out a few searches using your keywords and some of the search techniques above.

4.7 Saving your search results

You usually have the option to select specific records to keep by marking or tagging them. Most databases will offer the following methods of saving your search results:

- Email records to yourself
- Save to your PC or memory stick. Create your own account within certain databases to save your searches to re-run later or set up alerts
- Print out
- Export to bibliographic management software such as RefWorks or Endnote
• **RSS feeds** allow you to have journal tables of contents sent to a personal webpage or RSS reader (RSS feeds can be more convenient than e-mail alerts, such as those from Zetoc, as they often contain direct links to the full text of some articles)

• You can use alerting services such as **Zetoc Alerts** to receive regular e-mails to update you on new publications. Once the alert is set up, it happens automatically, so you do not need to re-run literature searches at a later stage, unless you wish to - [http://zetoc.mimas.ac.uk/](http://zetoc.mimas.ac.uk/)

It is good practice to keep a record of which database you used and the search query you used.

**5. Citing 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 research supervisor or departmental handbook can offer guidance on what citation style is required for the piece of work you are doing. Internet materials need to be referenced just the same as printed sources.

**5.1 Managing your references using RefWorks**

RefWorks is an online bibliographic management program which enables you to capture, save and organise references into your own personal database. As a member of RHUL you can access it via the Library's e-resources 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 ([http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/training](http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/training)).

**6. Copyright & Plagiarism**

Within the context of academic research, there are a number of ethical issues which you should be aware of when embarking on your research.

• **Copyright**
  Copyright affects everyone who is reproducing material from published or unpublished material for any reason. You therefore need to be aware of the limits on what you can photocopy, scan, include in your research, and print out from PC etc. The Library has produced some basic guidance on copyright, available at: [https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library/teachingsupport/copyrightadvice.aspx](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library/teachingsupport/copyrightadvice.aspx)

• **Plagiarism**
  The College has policies and procedures in place for addressing issues of plagiarism.
7. 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.

The SCONUL Access Scheme is the first port of call if you need to use another University library and Royal Holloway participates in this scheme. You will be able to gain borrowing rights from most of the libraries participating in the scheme. You can obtain a SCONUL Access card from any our library help desks. Further information about the scheme and individual library borrowing rights can be found on the SCONUL Access web site http://www.access.sconul.ac.uk/

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. If you only want to access their electronic resources you can do this by registering online at https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library/usingourlibraries/otherlibraries/senatehouselibrary.aspx

To see which resources are available which are relevant to Geography please see the Senate House page on the Geography Subject Guide (http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/geography).

8. Your library account

Monitoring your account regularly can help you avoid overdue fines.

8.1 Accessing your account online

You can access your library account via the library catalogue. In order to do so you need to know your College computer username and password.

The following steps show how to access your library account:

- Go to Library Search
- Select the option Sign In
- Enter your College computer username and password.
- You can then check details about your current loans, previous loans, hold requests and cash transactions. You can also renew loans.

8.2 Renewing your library loans

The following steps show how to renew your books:

- Go to LibrarySearch
- Select the Sign In option
- Enter your College computer username and password. This will enable you to view details relating to your library account (loans, previous loans, hold requests, etc)
➢ To renew your items please select Loans. This will bring up a list of all items on loan to you. Use the Renew All option to renew them all at once or the Renew option next to the item to renew them individually.

Please note: You may not renew:

➢ 24 Hour Loans
➢ Items that have been requested by another user
➢ Any items, if you have outstanding unpaid library fines exceeding £35

8.3 Requesting items currently on loan

The following steps show how to request items that are on loan to another user.

➢ Go to Library Search and sign in
➢ Search for the item
➢ Click the Get It tab, select the Request link, then confirm by selecting the orange Request button
➢ Once the book is ready to collect from the reservations shelf, you will be notified via your RHUL email account

9. Off-campus access to online resources

Royal Holloway Campus Anywhere (VPN)

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 use the Virtual Private Network (VPN) service, also known as ‘CampusAnywhere’. The Campus Anywhere Service (Virtual Private Network / VPN) creates a connection between your computer / laptop at home and the College network. Whenever you use the Campus Anywhere connection, your computer is given the appearance of being part of the Royal Holloway Campus 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.

For details on how to set up the Campus Anywhere service, go to the Computer Centre homepage at: http://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/it and follow the link: CampusAnywhere (VPN)

If you have any difficulties with the setting-up CampusAnywhere, please phone the IT Service Desk who can help: 01784 414321. Alternatively, you can see the laptop support service, located in Bedford Library (room 2-01).

Further information on off-campus access can be found on our website https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library/searchourcollections/accessinge-resourcesoffcampus/offcampusaccess.aspx
10. Further help

Information Consultant for Geography: Emma Burnett, Bedford Library

Email: Emma.Burnett@royalholloway.ac.uk or library@royalholloway.ac.uk

Geography Subject Guide: http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/geography

Training page: http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/training

Twitter: @RHUL_Library

YouTube: LibraryRHUL