Library & Information Training: PIR

Research Skills for Projects & Dissertations

http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/PIR
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:

1. How to plan a literature search & develop a search strategy
2. How to find & use relevant resources
3. Saving your search results
4. Evaluating your search results
5. Citing & referencing, including using RefWorks
6. Off-campus access
7. Using other libraries
8. Further help

1. How to plan a literature search & develop a search strategy

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.

Analysing the questions

What exactly is the topic you are searching for?
Example: In what ways has globalisation enhanced the role of the nation-state in world politics?

What are the main concepts or keywords for your topic?
Example: Globalisation, nation-state, world politics

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.

Refining / limiting your search

If you have difficulties clarifying the concepts which make up your research question or if you are not sure about which keywords work together consider drawing a mind map before organizing your lists of keywords.

Developing your search

You can use the following strategies to make your search efficient and effective.

Truncation / wildcard searching

> Use to: widen your search and ensure you don't miss relevant search results

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 find 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 theat* will find results including the words theatre, theater, theatric, theatrical 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.

Different databases use different symbols for truncation and wildcard searching, so use the online help option to check what is used.
Search operators

> Use to: combine your search words and include synonyms

Also known 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 databases 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.

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 “Power transition theory” will find results which contain that phrase.

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 before or after a certain date?

- **language** – do you only want references in English or do you read other languages?

- **geography** – do you want information about a specific place or published in a particular country?

- **type of publication** – do you only want references to scholarly journal articles or would you also like to find books, newspaper articles or theses, for example. This will influence your choice of database to search as many databases only give information about one type of publication.
Think about your own dissertation topic and plan your search

Topic

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Keywords and concepts

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

Are there any ways you could limit your search?

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.
2. How to find & use relevant resources
   a) LibrarySearch [http://librarysearch.rhul.ac.uk/]

Searching for a book
- Use the Books, Music and Films search box
- Type in your keywords, e.g. "globalisation"
- Click on Locations to see what we have available on the shelves
- If an e-book is available, you will see a View Online option

Using LibrarySearch to Find Journal Articles

The following example shows you how to find journal articles in LibrarySearch on a specific topic
- Type your keywords into the All search box, e.g. "globalisation"
- Under Show Only, limit your results to Peer-reviewed Journals
- Click on Details to view the article summary
- Click on View Online to access the full text
- Select the ✭ icon to save an item to your e-shelf

Click on E-shelf to view your saved items. 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.

b) Google Scholar [http://scholar.google.co.uk/]

Please see [http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/googlescholar]

c) E-resources relevant to PIR

Although LibrarySearch and Google Scholar provide a good starting point for your research, you will also need to use other e-resources. To find e-resources relevant to PIR, see your subject guide at [http://libguides.ac.uk/PIR]

d) Tips for effective searching

- **Focusing a search by date, language or document type:** There are many ways to focus your search and all databases offer different ways of doing this.

- **“Cited reference” / “cited by” / “times cited” search:** When you find a useful article or book, looking at its bibliography will give you information about other, older, books and articles on your research topic. Some databases also allow you to search for literature which has cited the article or book you have found. This can give you useful leads on more recent research on the same topic.

3. Saving your search results

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

- **Email** search results 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
4. Evaluating your search results

Currency

- How recent is the information?
- How recently has the website been updated?
- Is it current enough for your topic?

Reliability

- What kind of information is included in the resource?
- Is content of the resource primarily opinion? Is it balanced?
- Does the creator provide references or sources for data or quotations?

Authority

- Who is the creator or author?
- What are the credentials?
- Who is the published or sponsor?
- Are they reputable?
- What is the publisher’s interest (if any) in this information?
- Are there advertisements on the website?

Purpose

- Is this fact or opinion?
- the creator/author trying to sell you something?
- Is it biased?

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.

Your 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.

Managing your references using RefWorks

RefWorks is an online bibliographic management program which enables you to capture, save and organize references into your own personal database. 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

For more information, see http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/refworks
6. Off Campus Access

Information on off-campus access can be found on our website [https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library/searchourcollections/accessingeresourcesoffcampus/offcampusaccess.aspx](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library/searchourcollections/accessingeresourcesoffcampus/offcampusaccess.aspx)

7. Using Other Libraries

Depending on your research topic you may wish to use other library collections. The following are particularly useful.

Senate House Library, University of London

You also have access to online resources from Senate House Library. You just need to register online [https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library/usingourlibraries/otherlibraries/senatehouselibrary.aspx](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library/usingourlibraries/otherlibraries/senatehouselibrary.aspx)

Senate House Library holds a national research level collection covering the Humanities and Social Sciences and has a good collection of books, journals and online resources for Media Arts. Library membership is available to all Royal Holloway students free of charge. In order to join Senate House Library, you need to take your RHUL College Card with you on your first visit.

UoL Libraries and SCONUL Access

Libraries which are part of the University of London will generally admit you if you show your valid RHUL College Card. Other libraries may require a SCONUL Access card or other documentation. You can apply for this online at [http://www.sconul.ac.uk/sconul-access](http://www.sconul.ac.uk/sconul-access)

British Library

The British Library at St Pancras is the national library holding all books published in the UK. It also has a wide range of journals and online resources. All students are eligible for a reader’s pass. To apply for a pass to the British Library Reading Rooms, you must make your first visit during the opening hours of the Reader Admissions office. For more information about applying for a British Library reader’s pass check: [http://www.bl.uk/](http://www.bl.uk/)

8. 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 PIR, European Studies & Philosophy:

Emma Burnett  emma.burnett@royalholloway.ac.uk

Further information can also be found on the Library website: [www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library](http://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/library)

PIR subject guide [http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/PIR](http://libguides.rhul.ac.uk/PIR)