

How to Search and Navigate CMU Library Databases

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Lesson Title: Mastering Research: A Guide to CMU Library Databases

Introduction (approx. 2 minutes total)

- **Welcome & Purpose:** Welcome to the CMU Library tutorial. This guide is designed to help you navigate our extensive digital resources with confidence.
 - **What You'll Learn:** In this session, you'll learn how to:
 - Access the library's databases from anywhere.
 - Select the best database for your research topic.
 - Build effective searches using proven techniques.
 - Retrieve full-text articles and manage your sources.
 - **Outcome:** By the end, you'll have the foundational skills to conduct efficient, high-quality research for your courses and projects.
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Module 1: Getting Started - Access and Login (approx. 3 minutes)

- **1.1 Starting Point: The Library site on the SRS**
 - Your journey begins at the CMU Library homepage. This is your central hub for all library resources.
- **1.2 Finding Databases**
 - Look for a link labelled "**Databases**" This will take you to a comprehensive list of all our subscribed resources.
 - *Alternative Access:* You can also find featured databases and links within the '**Guide to the Library**' manual or on specific subject guides.
- **1.3 Remote Login**
 - If you are off campus, you may be required to use a VPN to access the databases and ProQuest eBook collection.
 - Use your standard **CMU credentials** (your university email and password) to gain access as instructed in the Library Guide. This verifies you as a current student or faculty member.

Module 2: Choosing Your Research Tool (approx. 3 minutes)

- **2.1 Not All Databases Are the Same**

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- Think of databases as specialized search engines, each with a unique focus. Some cover general topics, while others are dedicated to specific fields like law, business, or maritime education.
- **2.2 How to Select the Right One**
 - **Browse by Subject:** Use the subject dropdown menu on the A-Z Databases page. This will show you databases relevant to your field (e.g., Psychology, Engineering, History).
 - **Read Descriptions:** Each database has a brief description. Read it to understand the types of materials it contains (e.g., scholarly articles, news, trade publications).
 - **Key Database Examples:**
 - **EBSCOhost (Academic Search Complete):** A great starting point for multidisciplinary research.
 - **ProQuest:** Excellent for dissertations, theses, and subject-specific journals.
 - **ScienceDirect:** A leading database for scientific, technical, and medical research.
 - **JSTOR:** Perfect for archival, full-text articles in the humanities and social sciences.

Module 3: Building an Effective Search (approx. 5 minutes)

- **3.1 Start with Keywords**
 - Brainstorm the main concepts of your research question. For example, for the question "*How does social media affect teen mental health?*" your keywords are: social media, teenagers, mental health.
- **3.2 Using Boolean Operators (The Smart Way to Search)**
 - These simple words can dramatically improve your results:
 - **AND:** Narrows your search. social media AND teenagers AND mental health finds articles containing *all* these terms.
 - **OR:** Broadens your search. Used for synonyms. teenagers OR adolescents finds articles with either term.
 - **NOT:** Excludes terms. mental health NOT physical health removes articles about physical health.
- **3.3 Refining with Filters**
 - After your initial search, use the database filters (usually on the left sidebar) to narrow your results:
 - **Peer-Reviewed Journals:** Ensures you're using scholarly, vetted research.
 - **Full-Text:** Limits results to articles you can access immediately online.

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- **Publication Date:** Find the most current research on your topic.
- **Source Type:** Choose between academic journals, news articles, books, etc.

Module 4: Advanced Search Techniques (approx. 4 minutes)

- **4.1 Phrase Searching & Truncation**
 - **"Phrase Searching":** Use quotation marks to search for an exact phrase. Example: "social media" finds that exact string of words.
 - **Truncation (*):** Use an asterisk to find multiple word endings. Example: teen* will find teen, teens, teenager, teenagers.
- **4.2 Field Searching**
 - Most databases offer an "Advanced Search" page where you can tell the database to search for your keyword only in specific fields, like the **Title**, **Author**, or **Subject** for much more precise results.
- **4.3 Learning from a Good Article**
 - When you find a highly relevant article, use it as a research tool:
 - **Cited References (Going Backward):** Look at its bibliography to find older, foundational research on the topic.
 - **Cited By (Going Forward):** Look for a "Cited By" or "Times Cited in this Database" link to find newer research that has cited this article.

Module 5: Retrieving the Full Text (approx. 3 minutes)

- **5.1 Direct Access**
 - Look for links like **"PDF Full Text"** or **"HTML Full Text."** Click to download and read the article immediately.
- **5.2 Last Resort: Interlibrary Loan (ILL)**
 - Speak to your university Librarian.

Module 6: Saving and Citing Your Sources (approx. 3 minutes)

- **6.1 Saving Your Work**

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- **Create an Account:** Most databases allow you to create a free personal account to save articles, create folders, and save your search history.
 - **Email/Download:** Use the database tools to email articles to yourself or download the PDFs to your computer or cloud storage (like Google Drive or OneDrive).
 - **6.2 Citing with Confidence**
 - Look for a "**Cite**" button (often represented by quotation marks). A pre-formatted citation will be generated for you in styles like APA, MLA, or Chicago.
 - **Critical Warning:** These computer-generated citations often contain errors (incorrect capitalization, missing punctuation). **Always double-check them** against an official style guide before using them in your paper.
 - **6.3 Using Citation Managers**
 - For large research projects, use a reference manager. You can often export citations directly from the database to tools like **Zotero, Mendeley, or EndNote**. These programs help you organize sources and automatically create bibliographies.
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Conclusion & Support (approx. 2 minutes)

- **Key Takeaways:**
 - Start at the CMU Library website and use your credentials to log in.
 - Choose a database that matches your subject area.
 - Build smart searches with keywords, Boolean operators, and filters.
 - Use advanced techniques like phrase searching and citation tracking.
 - Access full text directly, via "Find Full Text," or through Interlibrary Loan.
 - Save your sources and generate citations but always verify their accuracy.
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Need Help? We're Here for You!

- **Library Chat:** WhatsApp us @ the numbers below
- **Email:** Send your questions to [library@cmu.edu or cmulibrary123@gmail.com].
- **In Person:** Visit the reference desk at the main library.
- **Research Guides:** Check us for subject-specific LibGuides for curated resources and tips.
- Thank you! Happy Researching!

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