

# Searching Electronic Databases

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## What are electronic databases?

- A library database is an organised collection of records that can be accessed electronically.
- Library databases provide a catalogue of journal articles. Also, some databases may catalogue conference papers, government reports, reviews and chapters from books.
- These database records usually include the author's name(s), the article title, the source as either the journal name or conference details etc. and the subject terms, which are sometimes called descriptors. Records may also include an abstract or brief summary of the article. Some databases also include links to the full text of the journal article.
- There are two different types of library database:-
  - Specific subject databases – databases for sociology, psychology, geography, etc.
  - Multi-subject databases – databases covering two or more subject areas.

## Why search databases?

- Journals, which are also known as serials or periodicals, are an important source of information about recent developments and new ideas in particular subject areas.
- Details about the contents of journals are not included in the normal library catalogue.
- Browsing through the extensive collection of journals in the Library's collection is an inefficient way to search.
- Databases are an effective and efficient way to find journal articles.

## Accessing the Library's databases

- From the Library's home Web page at <http://www.utas.edu.au/library>
- Click on the **Databases** link on the right side of the Web page.
- Select your database from within the appropriate **Alphabetic List** of databases.
- Then scroll down and click on its **title**.
- Most databases can be accessed from any computer, but you will be asked for your University **email name and password** to use the database.
- A few databases are only available in the Library. Where appropriate, this is noted on the Database page.

## Which database to use?

- Suitable databases are listed on the relevant **Subject Guide** pages in the "How do I find journal articles" area. Subject guides are linked to all the Library's Web pages and are also listed on the Database page.
- Also, please ask a **librarian** for advice and help using databases. (See also training below)

## Planning your search

Planning your search will help you to search more effectively. Some steps you may follow include:-

- **Defining your topic.** Use a subject encyclopaedia or dictionary to clarify your terms and get an overview of your topic. Please ask a Reference Librarian how to find suitable encyclopaedias and dictionaries in the Library's Reference collection.
- **Identify keywords or concepts** in the topic and also consider alternative words and spellings. NB. Remember alternative Australian and American terminology and spelling. You can always find more words as you search.

## Refining your search

### Combining search words

Many databases allow you to combine your search words and phrases with Boolean operators. They will either narrow or broaden your search.

Boolean operator	Example	What it finds
AND	bushfires AND prevention	Articles must contain both words. AND narrows your search and reduces your results.
OR	tourism OR travel	Articles may contain either word. OR widens your search and increases your results.

### Truncation and wildcards

Use truncation and wildcards to find variations of your search word or variation in the spelling of the word.

Symbol	Example	What it finds
* (asterisk)	educat*	Finds all the different endings of the word. i.e. educator, educated, educating, education, and educational.
? (question mark)	Organi?ation	Finds both spelling of the word. i.e. organisation and organization

## Finding the full text of articles

- Some databases provide a link to the complete article (full-text).
- Most databases do not provide links to the full text. They only provide the bibliographic details and may also include an abstract. (See What are electronic databases? above)
- If the full-text is not linked, you must check to see if the Library holds the source (journal, conference papers, etc.) of the particular article.
- There are two ways to check for journals:-
  1. Search the Library's catalogue using the **Serial Titles Alphabetical** option, which lists both the paper and electronic journals in the Library's collection.
  2. Check the Library's electronic journals collection by clicking on the **E Journals** link on the left side of the Library's Web pages.
- For books, conference papers, reports, etc. check the library catalogue using the appropriate source name in an **All Titles Alphabetical** search.

## Saving, printing and e-mailing

Many databases allow records and full-text (when available) to be downloaded onto a disk or the computer, printed or emailed.

## Help and training

- There are help sheets for all our major databases, which provide more specific assistance. These help sheets are available in a printed form or from the Library's Web site at:-  
<http://www.utas.edu.au/library/assist/index.html>
- There are also online interactive "eTutor" tutorials for several databases, which are available at:-  
<http://www.utas.edu.au/library/assist/index.html>
- If you are in the library, please ask a librarian for help or alternatively:-
  - Ring 6226 2225 or 6226 1818
  - Email [Cent.Reference@utas.edu.au](mailto:Cent.Reference@utas.edu.au)
  - Fill in the "Ask Us" online help page