

Steps for Finding Articles

Finding articles on your research topic requires a different search strategy than finding books. If you are away from VMI, use **Off-Post Access** < <http://www.vmi.edu/Library.aspx?id=15769> > to use subscription resources which are restricted to VMI patrons.

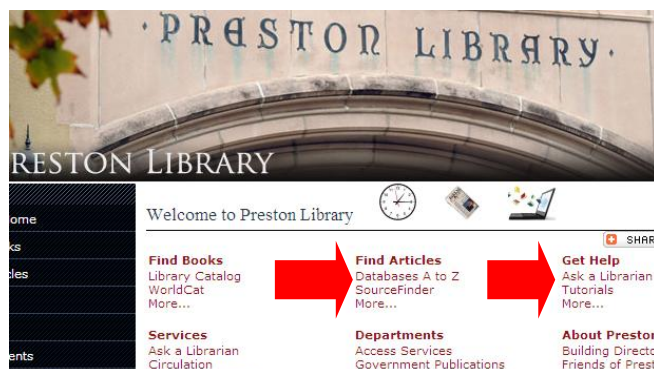
Step 1 – Choose an appropriate database. How do you do this?

Option 1: A librarian can recommend one or more.

- Reference librarians are experts in choosing a database. They are available to help you **in person** at the reference desk
 - Mon – Fri, 0800-1630
 - Sun – Thurs, 1900–2200

They can also help you **via email, IM, and phone.**

For contact information, see “Ask a Librarian”
<http://www.vmi.edu/Show.aspx?tid=20389&id=8125>
Library Homepage > Get Help > Ask a Librarian



- Then click the database of your choice from the list at Databases A to Z.
Library Homepage > Find Articles > Databases A to Z

Option 2: Use *SourceFinder* < <http://www1.vmi.edu/sourcefinder/> > to identify a database.

- **Library Homepage > Find Articles > SourceFinder**
- Highlight your field of study and select the type of resource you want to find (“Articles”).
- Apply other limits, and select “Search.”
- SourceFinder will retrieve a list of databases with descriptions. The most important databases are marked **Key Resource**.
- Choose a database from the list, and click on the title to access it.

Step 2 – Search for your topic within the database.

Here are some searching conventions that are common to many databases.

1. **Keyword** searching

A keyword search retrieves citations which include your search terms in any field in the record and sometimes in the abstract or the article text, depending on the database.

- Use nouns as your keywords; avoid common words, such as “the,” “of,” “to,” etc. For example, “**camping equipment**” instead of “**equipment to use when you camp**”
- If you want to search for more than one word side-by-side and in a given order, enclose the phrase in quotations. For example, “**gender equity**”

Keywords can be combined with **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT** to get better search results.

- Use **AND** to find records that have **both** of your terms. This narrows a search. This is especially helpful when there are several aspects of your topic. For example, “**gender equity**” **AND** **military**
- Use **OR** to find records that have **either** of your terms. This broadens a search. This is especially helpful for synonyms. For example, “**capital punishment**” **OR** “**death penalty**”
- Use **NOT** to exclude an aspect of a topic. This also narrows a search. For example, **depression NOT great**

2. **Subject heading** or **descriptor** searching

Subject headings or **descriptors** are part of a predefined “controlled vocabulary,” assigned to describe the content of an article or book. Think of it as a consistent labeling system. Some terms are used, and other terms for the same concept are not used. This groups together most information on a topic.

A subject search retrieves records in which the exact subject heading you enter appears in the subject field. The terms must match exactly, but a subject search yields highly relevant results.

So, the trick is to find the correct term. To find a correct subject heading:

- Use the online thesaurus if the database has one. The thesaurus is a guide to the controlled vocabulary of the database, designating which terms are used. It may also list broader, narrower, and related terms. Examples of a thesaurus include
 - Subject Terms in Academic Search Complete
 - MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) in Medline
 - TermFinder (from *APA's Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms*) in PsycNET
- For any relevant article found using a keyword search, open the full record and look for subject headings that have been assigned. Subject headings are often hyperlinks, so you can click on them or copy them into subsequent searches.

3. Take advantage of database options for refining searches. Often these appear in sidebars to the left or right of results, as seen below.

The image shows a database search results page. On the left, a sidebar contains refinement options: '1307 Results for...', 'Refine your results' (with checkboxes for Full Text, References Available, and Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals), a date range filter from 1986 to 2011, and various filters like Source Types, Subject: Thesaurus Term, Subject, NAICS/Industry, Publication, and Company. A red box highlights the sidebar, and a red arrow points from the 'Subject: Thesaurus Term' filter to a pop-up window. The pop-up window, titled 'Subject: Thesaurus Term', lists various subject terms with checkboxes: GENDER, EQUALITY, GENDER inequality, SEX discrimination, EQUITY, UNIVERSITIES & colleges, EDUCATION, EDUCATION, Higher, SEX differences, and SEX role. The main search results area shows a list of results, with the first one titled 'Gender equity in Aust'.

Limit by such factors as

- Full-text
- Date range (of article)
- Type of publication
- Subject terms (visible by clicking the arrows – see arrow, below)

Step 3 – Evaluate the results and choose a relevant article.

Once you find an article you want, you should leave the browse list, with its abbreviated information, and access the full record by clicking on the article title. You will see more options from the full record view.

Step 4 – Find the article text.

1. Look for a full-text link.

- Often you must open the record to find the full-text link in the full record view.
- The link could be .pdf or .html.

2. If there is **no** full-text link, look for this button:



WebBridge is software that links one database to another. It will

- Offer a link to full-text **OR**
- Offer a link to our Interlibrary Loan system, in which a request for the article is **automatically filled out.**

For more information, [Ask A Librarian.](#)

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