PADM 625

PADM 625 – Search Tips
These tips supplement and complement the demonstrations in class for searching databases

Tips for All Databases:
• Use quotation marks – “xxxxx xxxxx” – when you are searching for phrases.
• Look for a peer-reviewed or scholarly or academic link to limit to scholarly articles.
• Use the limiters and other tools within the database to save time and effort.
• Look at the abstract and search terms that are attached to promising references – you should discover additional vocabulary to try.
• Use navigation aids in the database, e.g., back to results, modify search, rather than using the browser back button.
• Search history is usually retained for the session; look for # recent searches or search history or previous searches.
• Look for links to articles that cite your article (e.g., cited by) and to sources used in your article (e.g., references). These will lead you forward and backward from your article.

1. PAIS Index (ProQuest) [NOTE: The other ProQuest databases, e.g., Social Services Abstracts are similar, but see the note for ABI/INFORM Collection below]

Example: Building a search and using database features to limit / expand
1st line - homeless* [NOTE: The * will pick up variations of the word 'homeless']
2nd line - policy
There will be 820+ results

Note the choices under Source Type and Document Type on the right. These can be very useful when you are looking for a particular type of material. Look at the Publication Date graph. It sometimes will provide clues as to when an issue became important. Note that you can enter date ranges if you wish.

Select Peer reviewed. The number of results will decrease to about 345+.

Select 'preview' for several of the references and note words such as housing policy, social policy, public welfare, labor policy. If you decide to add these to the search --
Select modify search and add those terms to your search. The 2nd line might look like this: "social policy" OR "public welfare"
*NOTE for ABI/INFORM Collection: Select Anywhere except full text. ABI/INFORM has much full text in it, and this choice will search just the relevant parts of the reference, i.e., title, abstract, subject terms, and ignore the irrelevant use of your terms in the very last paragraph of a long article.

2. Public Administration Abstracts (EBSCO) [NOTE: The other EBSCO databases, e.g., Business Source Complete, are similar]

Search Example:
1st line – homeless*
2nd line – policy
There will be about 55+ results

Limit to scholarly articles - Select scholarly (peer reviewed) from the limiters on the left
This will reduce the number of results to around 45+

Look at the abstracts and the subjects being used to describe the records. Note words and phrases such as political planning, strategic planning, urban planning. You might decide to change the 2nd line to read:

policy OR planning
There should be about 55+ results
3. Advanced Search (VCU Libraries Search)

You may want to select a Material type, e.g., 'articles' or 'books'
Use the limits on the left of the results as applicable
Click on view online to reach the link(s) to ejournal articles or ebooks