PADM 609 – 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.
• Look for the Get it @ VCU button or a PDF/Full Text link to lead you to the full article.

1. ABI/INFORM Collection (ProQuest) [NOTE: The other ProQuest databases, e.g., PAIS Index, are similar]

Example: Building a search and using database features to limit / expand
1st line – “financial management”
Select Anywhere except full text
Why? ABI/INFORM Collection has much full text in it, and this choice will search just the important parts of the reference, i.e., title, abstract, subject terms, and ignore the irrelevant use of your terms in the last paragraph of a very long article.
2nd line – government* OR "public sector"; select Anywhere except full text
There will be 9,450+ results.

Select Peer reviewed. The number of results will decrease to about 2,255+.

Note the choices under Source Type and Document Type on the left. 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.

Notice that there are other ways to limit on the Narrow results menu, e.g., Subject,
Classification, and Location. The number of results you will obtain is listed next to each choice. For example, selecting Experiment/theoretical treatment under Classification will find about 245+ results, all of which are research articles.

Select preview for several of the references and note words and phrases such as financial reporting, accounting standards, governmental accounting, government agencies. If you decide to add these to the search -- Select modify search and add those terms to your search. The search lines might look like this:

1st line - "financial reporting"
2nd line - "government agencies"

Check the peer-reviewed box
There should be about 120+ results from this particular search
Limiting to 2010-2019 reduces this to about 30

2. EconLit (EBSCO) [NOTE: The other EBSCO databases, e.g., Business Source Complete, Academic Search Complete, are similar]

Search Example:
1st line – "property taxes"
2nd line – city OR cities OR urban
There will be about 250+ results

Limit to scholarly articles - Select scholarly (peer reviewed) from the limiters on the left
This will reduce the number of results to around 170

Look at the abstracts and the subjects being used to describe the records for possible additional terms.
4. Advanced Search (VCU Libraries Search)

Tips:
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