PADM 601 – 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 [NOTE: All the ProQuest databases (PAIS, Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Worldwide Political Science Abstracts) are similar]

Example: Building a search and using database features to limit / expand

Enter “social equity” into the search box

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. NOTE: You may use Anywhere for the other databases.

There will be 1000+ results

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. Select Peer reviewed. The number of results will decrease to around 370+.

Select Preview for several of the references and note words such as social justice, equal access.

Select Modify search and add those terms to your search. The search box will look like this:

"social equity" OR "social justice" OR "equal access"

Select Peer reviewed. There will be around 3700+ results

Now add your specific area of interest as a search term, e.g., health, internet, education, justice, social services. Modify search | enter term onto 2nd line | select anywhere but full text.
2. Public Administration Abstracts [NOTE: All the EBSCO databases (Business Source Complete, Political Science Complete, Academic Search Complete) are similar]

Search Example:
1st search box - "red tape" OR bureaucracy
2nd search box – size OR growth
There will be about 225+ results

Limit to scholarly articles
Select Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals from the limiters on the left
Now there should be around 150 results

Note words in titles and abstracts, subjects, and countries that you might want to add to the search.

3. PsycINFO

Search Example
1st search box – "organizational behavior"
2nd search box – "governmental behavior" OR "government agenc*"
Among the 280+ results will be about 42+ dissertations. Dissertations generally contain a literature review section and an extensive reference list, so they can be very useful in finding sources. Click on the title of a dissertation and scroll down the record to see if there is an OpenURL field. If there is, the link will lead you to the full text of the dissertation.

Select Edit Search above the results list
Change the 2nd search box to read – "government personnel" OR "government agenc**"
There should be 565+ results.
Select peer reviewed journal on the left, and you should have 340+ results.
Click on the title of an article and note the terms being used to describe it. You may want to change the 2nd search box to read – "government policy making"

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

5. Google Scholar - Tips
- Deselect 'patents'
- Configure Google Scholar for VCU Libraries: Select Settings
  - Get it @ VCU: Library Links | VCU – Get it @ VCU
- Note: When your results appear, you may have to click on the double arrow [more] to see the Get it @ VCU link

6. Cited Reference Search (Web of Science) – Finding articles citing an author
- Select Cited Reference Search – click on the arrow beside Basic Search to unfold the choices
  - 1st search box (Cited Author) - frederickson h*
  - 2nd search box (Cited Work) - Click on View abbreviation list, navigate to Public Administration Review, copy and paste the abbreviation into the search box
  - 3rd search box (Cited Year) – enter 1990

There should be 1 cited work.
- Click first on Select All and then on Finish Search.
- There will be about 61 citing articles.

Cited reference searches work best when you have both author and article information.