

Discover the Databases of WSU Libraries

ERICA ENGLAND: Hi, everyone. So tonight, we are going to go over databases-- what they are, how you can find them. And am I going to cover five specific databases that are multidisciplinary, that I think is going to help with any research that you may have from this point on.

One of the questions that we always get is, what is the database? Students don't really understand what databases are. And so the easiest way that I have found to describe it is if you think of a database as a metal filing cabinet. So it's going to be a collection of information that has been categorized, sorted-- whether it's by source type or discipline, things like that.

So if you think of the database as a metal filing cabinet, then the journals are actually going to be the files within that metal filing cabinet. And so the articles that are published within the journals are actually going to be the papers within each of those folders. So that is really the easiest way to understand exactly what a database is and how they are housed.

So I also get a lot of questions from students about why they should use academic databases and not continue to do Google. And so there's a couple of reasons. Number one, it all really depends on what kind of research you're doing.

So Google is really good for background research. I can't stress enough-- like, go in and learn all that you can about your topic. Get a really good understanding of it. Jot down key terms, names, dates, things like that. But keep in mind that you're not always guaranteed to get the best quality out of Google. And so there are things like-- Google uses certain algorithms. And so you might not be getting the best results.

You also get a ton of results. And so sometimes it's even information overload. And then, a lot of people don't realize that Google has regionally-specific content. And then, of course, keep in mind that all websites, links, things like that-- they're unstable. They can be taken down at any point.

So the reason why you want to start using the academic databases is because they contain only information that has been published. And so that means there's going to be books and journal articles and magazines and newspapers and the like. Usually, they tend to also be a lot more credible than what you're going to find out on Google. And so they are a lot more trustworthy.

And then, most databases-- actually, you can refine your results by using the limiters. And so it makes it more manageable to actually use them. And then, of course, what you find in the databases-- that is going to be stable information. It is never going to be taken down on a whim or anything. You will always be able to access it.

So tonight-- and I'm not trying to persuade you to not use Google, whatsoever. I'm all for Google. But just keep that in mind. Use that when it comes to background research. For actually doing your research for your research papers, you actually want to use the databases.

So tonight we're going to go over-- like I said before, we're going to go over five of them. These are the most common. They are also the most user-friendly. I imagine you guys are pretty familiar with some of them. But I'm going to show you some things that you can do in each of the databases and tell you what the advantages and disadvantage to each of these databases are.

So with that, we're going to pop over to the library's website. Awesome, thank you. And so our students really struggle with finding the databases. And so there's actually a couple ways that you can locate the databases. So if you go from the library's home page, under Research, and click on Find Articles, Databases-- just ignore the Search It box up here. But there's a couple ways you can do it. You can go Databases A-Z, and click on this. And of course, it's going to pull up an alphabetical list of it.

And so if you know what specific database you're going into-- so let's say that we're going to go into Web of Science. So if you click on W and just scroll down, here's Web of Science. Click on it. You're actually going to go into the database, right?

Well, not everybody remembers the name of databases. And so you can actually look at them by how they are categorized by subject. And so if you click on this, what we've done is we've actually broken them down so that they're discipline-specific. And so when you get higher up into your programs, you're going to, of course, concentrate on the ones that only deal with your specific discipline.

And so you can always go in and just take a look at them. So for example, if you're an anthropology major, you can just call on these. And then it will pull up-- and there's always a box at the top of them that has the featured databases. So what this is, is the anthropology librarian has deemed that these are going to be your best bets for finding the best resources that deal with your specific subject. And so they'll be in this top box. But then all of these are also going to refer to them.

And then, you'll also notice that your librarian-- who is the anthropology librarian-- their contact information will be in here, too. So for example, Erica Nicol works with anthropology. So if you click on this, here's all of her contact information. You can just email her and things like that.

So tonight, some of the databases that we are going to talk about-- like I said, they're multi-disciplinary. And those are housed under General Topics . And so if you click on these-- General Topics-- these are the three most common general topics that you'll be able to find things. But we also have all of these as well. And so you can always find it that way.

Or you can actually-- if you know the title of it, you can actually do just a Search It search for it, so that you don't have to go through all of that. So the first one we're going to talk about today is JSTOR. And so if you just type in JSTOR and search it-- you want to make sure that you're pulling up the one that has it listed as a database. Sometimes there's going to be-- oh, like reference entries, or even reviews of it. So make sure you're clicking on the one that says database.

And when you click on that-- for whatever reason, you have to actually click on the database name again. But it will actually bring you into the database. And so we have it set up so that it goes automatically into Advanced Search. And this is actually a really good way to get started with doing your research.

And so this database is a repository of information. And it's got scholarly articles. And it's got a whole bunch of literary criticism and reviews in it, lots of historical information as well. I think it dates back to-- I wrote it down-- 1665.

But the problem with JSTOR is that it actually has a rolling wall of three years. And so that means it's not the most current information. So everything in it-- the most current information that you will find is from 2015. And so next year, when we go into 2019, there will be all the information from 2016 put in there as well. So keep that in mind when you're actually searching. If you need things that are published this year, JSTOR is not going to be the database for you.

So some of the biggest advantages of it is, it's very user-friendly. Students love this database. And it's really nice, because you can actually limit on here. You can narrow it down. So if you know that you need journal articles you can just select this. But you can also look into these different disciplines, so that you are getting exactly what deals with your topic.

So I'm going to very quickly do a search in here. And we were asked tonight by an instructor to use the term "big data" for doing the searching. And so if you just put in "big data" and you search for this, you'll see that we get a ton of results. We get almost 200,000 results. And this is a really big, really terrible search result, actually.

And so with any of the databases, when you're using more than one term you need to actually put them in quotation marks. And the reason why you're doing this-- you're doing what's called phrase searching. But you're telling the database-- I need these two words to be in this order. And I need you to treat it as one word.

Because right now, all of our results are pulling in the word "big." And they're also pulling in the word "data." And so when we search for this, you'll see that we go down to 685 search results. And so it gets a lot better with that.

But something that you always want to do is-- this is still a really big search. And so what you want to do is you want to include as many terms that relate to your topic as possible. So if

we're searching for big data and ethics, the research-- you'll see that we get 109 results, right? And so this is actually a pretty search result to start with.

And so from here, we can actually go down. We can click on Journals and update our results. And now we have 91 journal articles that deal with big data and ethics.

So one of the drawbacks to JSTOR is, you don't get an abstract with this. And so it's not like you can just pull it up and get an idea of what the article is going to be about. You actually have to pull up the article and read it. And so to do that, all you have to do is click on the title, click on Download PDF. And then there it is. Or sometimes they will even have it right down here at the bottom. It's not always there, so always double-check.

But one of the biggest advantages that this database has is these subject terms down here, these topics. This will help you look at other sources that deal specifically with your topic. So for example, if we were going to look at the political economy that deals with big data and ethics-- if we click on political economy, and actually up at the top is going to give you some information that deals with big data and political economy.

And you'll see that it's from Wikipedia. So of course, you don't want to cite this, whatsoever. But this is going to help you get an understanding of what your topic is going to be about. And you'll see that it went up, right? We got 19,000 results. And the reason why is because we're now searching political economy.

And so of course, we want to go over to our search terms. And we want to make sure that we're looking-- let's say we want to look at businesses, right? And so we just go back up. And we update our results. And we click on Journals, of course.

And here we go. So we've narrowed it down a little bit. But we can still search within this topic. And so again, we can put in big data and ethics. And now-- look at that. We have one article. So maybe this isn't the best search. But this would-- it looks like it's going to have every single thing that we want to deal with it. And in fact, I would always recommend that you take a look at what these topics are, because they may actually help you build up your word bank or help you shape the direction of your focus that you want to go to into.

So that's JSTOR, kind of in a nutshell. Like I said, it's really user-friendly. As with any database, you need to just get in and work around in it, and see what it does and how you can use it and stuff.

So the next one that I want to go into is Academic Search Complete. And since we know the name of it, I am going to just type it. Again, we want to make sure we're going into the database.

And this is a multi-disciplinary, full-text database. And it's got journals, periodicals, books. This is for the Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as the STEM fields. And it's a really

fundamental starting point for academic research. And so anytime you're actually starting your research, I think this is a really good database to go into.

It contains author-supplied key terms, rich most databases don't. And so it's really nice, because sometimes authors coin terminology. And the research community picks up with it. And again, that's going to help you build up your word with it.

It also has-- as a bonus, you get videos that go along with whatever your topic is. But you'll see, again, I just put in big data. We got almost 29,000 results. And so just to show you again, it's so important to include quotation marks around your search term. We go down to about 11,000. It's still really big.

But again, this is a really user-friendly database. And so over here on the left-hand side, you can limit. And I always recommend that your first go-round, you limit to full text. And so this is everything that you can get your hands on immediately.

And you'll notice that you're getting a whole bunch of different results in here. We have academic journals, periodicals, all kinds of things in here. We even have some reviews. And so again, you can just simply go over to source types and narrow it down to exactly what you're looking for. So sometimes instructors say you have to include a newspaper. You have to include an academic journal-- whatever. Just simply select that. And then it will narrow it down even further.

And so to access these, all you have to do is click on PDF full-text. And then here's the actual article. And then from here, of course, you can email it to yourself. Or you can even print it.

And then if you click on the record-- for whatever reason, it's not going to do it. Let me see-- is it not going to-- nope, it's not going to let me do it. Oh, I know what it is. OK, sorry-- because we're searching full-text. So we want to take full-text off, because you are going to find that-- for example, like this one, we actually don't have access to this. It just means-- wait, let me back up. We do have access to it. But it's not part of our collection.

All you have to do is click on Find it at WSU. And then-- well, this one we do have. Look at that. I love it when it makes me a liar. Yep, here it is. OK, so we will go back and try another one. This PlumX Metrics-- you don't need to worry about it. I don't know why it keeps coming up.

So this one, we do have. So what's happening here is these are non-EBSCO databases that it's not recognizing. And of course, I'm not going to be able to find one. This is the story of my life, it seems like. OK, well, we lucked out on this one.

If you ever get one that we actually don't have access to, or we don't have in our collection, you will see-- instead of this right here, there will be a link to requesting it through interlibrary loan. I've talked before about setting up interlibrary loan. All you have to do is click on that link, sign in, and then hit Request. And the article will be emailed to you.

So like I said, that was a really quick version of Academic Search Complete. And so the next one that I want to talk about is Opposing Viewpoints in Context. And this is a really good database, because it deals with social issues-- current social issues right now. It's very user-friendly.

But what I like most about it is it gives the pros and cons of the debate. So you're getting, actually, both sides of the story. And it's really nice, because you can search by either your discipline, or if you're struggling to even come up with a topic. If you click on Browse Issues, it's actually going to pull up all of the different topics that it deals with. And so you can just scroll here and see what's going on.

And so, for example, if we were doing something with stem cells, if we click on this-- if you click on View More Here, what this does is it gives you really good background information. Again, you probably don't want to quote this. This is just to give you a really good understanding of what your topic is and to help you develop your word bank and which direction you want your research to go in.

But if you'll notice here, we have the different viewpoints. But we also have links to articles and statistics and newspapers and podcasts and magazines and all kinds of things. And all of this information is extremely credible information. And so all you have to do is just click on these-- well, the viewpoints. But if you click on this, it should just take you right out to where the information is coming from.

And so this would be really good to incorporate into your own research. And it's just a really good starting point to figuring out what research you want to do, and get a really good understanding of it. And of course, you can always just type it in here.

And I would say the biggest disadvantage to this database is unfortunately, not all topics are going to be in it, where you do get that really nice background to it. But at the same time, just by typing in "big data," you will see that we get all kinds of things in here. And again, they are all going to be very credible information. And so this is a really good place for you to start doing your research.

OK, so the next one that I want to go into is ERIC. And nobody knows what ERIC stands for, at all. But it's an education database. And it stands for Education Resources Information Center. And so of course, it's an education database. It's going to have a lot to do with education, but also some social sciences.

It's got journal articles and books. And-- don't know if I'm going to be able to find it, doing it this way, actually. Yeah, there it is. So you'll notice, here's an article, a print book, and all that. And it's all the way down here under database. But it's got a lot of historical information in it.

And the biggest advantage that it has-- that came up here. The biggest advantage that it has is this thesaurus, right here. And so this thesaurus-- whenever you see this in a database, this

means that this database looks at controlled vocabulary. And that means that you need to use those terms that this database is recognizing.

And so to access this, if you click on thesaurus and then scroll down, right here, all you have to do is put in your term. So if we're going to stick with "big data" and click Browse, it doesn't recognize this at all, right? And so this is why it's not always going to be the best database for you to use. But if we start messing around with our terms-- and let's just go with "data."

So it recognizes the term "data" here. But if you actually click on this, it's actually going to give you some related terms. And this may actually help you figure out exactly what you want to talk about when it comes to your search term.

So for example, maybe we wanted to talk about-- I don't know, data analysis, right, or even statistical data. Well, that might not be exactly what big data is. But at the same time, that's going to give you a different term that you can use to incorporate that. And so if you click on statistical data, it actually going to pull up a whole bunch of other information, like meta-analysis, things like that.

And so again, this is definitely going to help you build up your work. And so if you are struggling to come up with words, I would really recommend that you go into ERIC. And you just put in your terms, and see what's coming up and see if it's related.

Now, of course, with that being said, keep in mind that it's an education database. And so you're looking at the STEM fields, you might not actually be finding exact information that deals with it. But again, it may give you some additional terms that you can use. OK?

So then last, we're going to talk about Web of Science. Web of Science, even though it's got the word "science" in there, it's actually multi-disciplinary. And it's even got arts and humanities in there. Of course, it's got sciences, but social sciences. And the really nice thing about this is it's updated weekly. And so you're getting absolutely the most current information that is possible out there.

And so it's got all of these filters in here. It starts off with a basic search, which you can always just start with, and see what's out there. Or you could go to Advanced Search. Now, Advanced Search-- it's really nice because it gives you these different field tags. And it allows you to see all of the things that you can search exactly for within Web of Science.

If that's too advanced for you-- and sometimes it is-- you can just go back to a basic search. And then, again, put in your search terms. And you'll see, this is a really big search. Again, we don't have-- quotation marks, sorry. We don't have quotation marks in it. And so if we go back and we put our quotation marks around it, we get about half of what was there to begin with.

And so it's still a really big search. But if you start looking over here when you start filtering, what I really like about this is it's got the most-cited works. And it's got the hot papers. This is

what's coming out right this minute. And then, of course, you can look at the different publication years.

But then it's got different categories that you can look to see exactly what you wanted to talk about when it comes to your subject. And then, of course, we have the different document types. And so there's journal articles and book chapters and things along that lines.

And then, it's really nice that it even breaks it down by an organization. So for example, University of California, their system-- they are working big time with big data stuff. And so maybe you just want to go in. You want to see what kinds of things that that particular institution is doing. And that's a really good way to get an idea of who is doing what within your particular field.

So if you wanted to actually get into one of these, the Find It at WSU-- huh. This has one that's pulling up, too. OK. But again, when you see this, this usually means that we don't have it. And so you're going to be prompted to sign in. OK-- it's totally making a liar out of me tonight. But-- let's see about this one. Requesting it through interlibrary loan. OK, I give up on trying to show you guys one that doesn't.

But if you click on this title, it will pull up the abstract to it. The key words-- again, always take a look at what the key words are. And what's really nice is if you click on these keywords, it's going to pull up all of the topics-- I mean all the papers that deal with that topic as well. And so that makes it really nice when you're trying to figure out what all is out there.

And so what else is really nice is you can actually search by the author. So usually, especially in the STEM fields, authors keep doing work that pertains to a particular subject, a particular area. And so, for example, if we were to click on this author, here is all of the work that they have done that deals with whatever this is. And so it's a really nice way of looking at it.

And then when you get down-- actually, it's up at the top. Oh-- what else is really nice is it keeps your search history in there. And so this is really nice, because it's telling you exactly what you showed and exactly what your results are. And so if you couldn't remember exactly what search terms you have used, this is a really good way of keeping track of that. And then, again, instead of trying to go back and duplicate your search to get to what you had been doing, all you have to do is go into your search history, click the number. And then it's going to pull up that exact same search as well.

OK, that's it for me. Real quick, real dirty, but a real quick overview. So all right.

KAITLIN HENNESSY: All right, we do have a couple questions.

ERICA ENGLAND: OK.

KAITLIN HENNESSY: And then if anyone else has questions, please pop them into the chat.

Our first question asks, can you explain a little bit about monographic sources and primary sources?

ERICA ENGLAND: Sure. So monographs are books, is what they are. They may actually contain primary research in there. But a monograph is just a book that-- whether one author wrote or multiple authors wrote.

Primary research-- it depends on which discipline you're talking about. So in the STEM fields, primary research is-- they have done the experiment themselves. They're not basing it on anyone else's. But in the humanities, it is primary sources. It's a first-hand account of an event. So that all depends on what database you're in, what results you're going to get, that come back in that and exactly what you need for your particular field.

KAITLIN HENNESSY: Awesome, thanks, Erica.

ERICA ENGLAND: Sure.

KAITLIN HENNESSY: Our next question asks, how do I find my subject librarian?

ERICA ENGLAND: Oh, yeah, that's a really good thing. Yay. OK, so from the library's home page, there's a couple ways that you can actually find who they are. So if you click on the subject of Resource Guides, these are guides that have been set up to help you in your particular classes. And so if you're taking a geography class and you're struggling with it, if you click on geography, and then just pull up a subject home page, it's actually going to pull up who your librarian is, and the guides that they are helping to create. And then if you click on their name, there's going to be their contact information and who they are. And so that's probably, I would say-- oops, sorry-- the easiest way to find them.