

Searching Tools

Select the appropriate tools (e.g., indexes, online databases) to search a particular topic. Search tools serve as the access points into information containers, organizing and describing the information in the container (formats and types of information).

There are three primary searching tools:

- the library's online catalog of holdings (OPAC) which serves as a gateway to a multiplicity of information sources
- databases, including indexes with abstracts; many with full-text content
- the Web, including search directories and engines

The major points of access into the searching tools include:

- keyword
- title
- author
- subject

We recommend you first review the major points of access into the searching tools, beginning with keyword searching.

Keyword Searching

A keyword search retrieves words or phrases from a database such as the OPAC or a periodicals database.

- may search the title, author, subjects, abstracts or even the full text content
- use when you have only a word or a simple phrase to begin with
- keyword searching may retrieve irrelevant items (like using Google).

Subject Searching

Most databases use special or controlled vocabulary called subject headings to describe what each item in the database is about.

- a subject search involves searching the subject headings of records in a database
- you must know the subject heading to use it
- the subject heading must be used within the database
- a problem with subject headings is that new subjects are slow to be described by the subject headings -- someone must create the new subject heading for it to exist

In this example, we conducted a subject search in the library's online catalog for "production planning." Four subject headings were found, and a total of ten items.

SUBJECT All Suffolk Libraries

<input type="button" value="Save Marked Records"/> <input type="button" value="Save All On Page"/>				
Num	Mark	SUBJECTS (1-4 of 4)	Year	Entries 13 Found
1		Production Planning -- See also the narrower term Manufacturing resource planning		1
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	Production Planning		9
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	Production Planning Data Processing	2006	1
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	Production Planning Periodicals		2

The important difference between a subject versus keyword search:

- subject searching retrieves high rate of relevant items but fewer number of hits than keyword searching
- keyword searching will find more items than subject searching but will likely retrieve irrelevant items

Title Searching

- using a full or partial title, users may search for works by title
- words like "the" or "a" should be ignored at the beginning, but not later in the title

Author Searching

- search by personal name author; or by artist, composer, government body, or organization
- always type in the last name first. If you know the author's first name or initial of the first name, you may also type it in to improve the search retrieval, but a first name is not required for an author search.

Online Catalog

The Suffolk University Libraries share an online catalog which is an index of materials located in the following libraries:

- Mildred F. SAWYER Library
- John Joseph Moakley LAW Library
- the library at the School of Arts and Design (NESAD)
- the library on the MADRID (Spain) campus
- the library on the DAKAR (Senegal) campus

The online system is nicknamed ARCHER, after Gleason Archer, the founder of Suffolk University. ARCHER is a bibliographic catalog. It identifies the items owned by the library, describes the physical nature of the resource (such as format, number of pages, publisher, etc.) and assigns each resource one or more subject headings.

What materials will you find when searching the online catalog?

The online catalog's indexing includes these types of materials:

- books, both print and electronic
- periodical and journal titles, both print and electronic (with direct links to some electronic titles)
- microforms (microfilm and microfiche)
- videotapes
- CD-ROMs
- database titles

ARCHER does not include:

- titles of individual articles within a periodical or journal title
- the full text of any periodical or journal article
- the full text of any electronic resource, such as electronic books and journals
- The online catalog is searched via the World Wide Web, making it available from any computer terminal with a web browser and a connection to the Internet (the Suffolk University dorms, homes, workplaces, etc).

The online catalog's primary search screen:

Although there are several places to begin a search of ARCHER, the best starting point is at <http://library.law.suffolk.edu/search/>



The screenshot shows the Suffolk University Library Catalog search interface. At the top, there is a yellow banner with the text "Suffolk University Library Catalog". Below this, there is a navigation menu with a "Search" button. The search interface includes a "Search by:" dropdown menu with options: Keyword, Title, Author, Subject, ISBN / ISSN, and Call Number. The "Keyword" option is selected. Below the dropdown is a "Search for:" text input field. To the right of the input field are links for "Course Reserves" and "Advanced Search". Below the input field is a "Select location:" dropdown menu with the option "All Suffolk Libraries" selected. To the right of the dropdown menu is a "SEARCH" button. On the left side of the search interface, there is a sidebar with a small image of a library interior and a list of links: "Course Reserves", "Electronic Journals A-Z list (Sawyer)", "View Your Circulation Record".

In addition to the major points of access (keyword, title, author and subject), ARCHER also can search by:

CALL NUMBER

- searching by call number is an effective way to search for a book because all books at Suffolk University are assigned call numbers

- because books with similar subject matter are shelved together, a scan of the call number index will convey some idea of the breadth and/or depth of the libraries' book collection in a particular subject area

COURSE NAME

- search for Course Reserves by course name or course number

Searching limiters available only through the online catalog:

Two additional limiters available only in the online catalog:

"Modify Search" after a keyword search

- the Modify Search button leads to the "Advanced Search" screen.

"Limit Search" after a title or subject search

- Allows you to select criteria to modify the results to one of the Suffolk University libraries, year of publication, format of the material, publisher and/or language, and to also sort the results by year.

Databases

Databases, especially periodical databases, are one of the most useful search tools for students when working on course-required assignments.

All major points of access -- keyword, subject, title and author -- are available when searching databases.

When selecting a database to search, consider these characteristics:

- subject area(s) of the database; while the subject coverage of databases may be broad, others are limited to a specific subject areas, such as psychology
- publication types (may have more than one type of material, such as periodicals and essays, etc.)
- geographic area (from limited to the U.S. to world coverage)
- language
- time period covered by the database (subject coverage in many electronic databases may only date back to the 1980s)
- availability of materials indexed
 - is the source owned or available from the Mildred F. Sawyer Library
 - or is it located in another library in Boston?
 - is it available in full-text from the database?

Reviewing Citations and Abstracts

Citations

You have conducted a search, and you review the list of the retrieved citations. Although the format of the search results differs from database to database, the information content presented is usually the same. What can you learn from the citations list?

- the article's author
- the article's title
- title of the journal
- date of publication
- in some databases, whether or not the article is available in full text

The article may be relevant to our research project, but we cannot tell from only reading the citation. Therefore, we will need to read the abstract to determine if this article is applicable for our research project.

Abstracts

All of the subscription databases available through the Sawyer Library provide abstracts of the periodical articles indexed. Abstracts are brief summaries of the article's content. Reading the abstracts for relevancy to your topic before looking for the resource in the online catalog, or reading and/or printing the entire article (if the full text is available through the database) will save you time and improve your research process.

Is this a useful article for your research? If this is a useful article but not available in full text from the database, note the bibliographic information from the citation to help you locate this journal in the Sawyer Library, or another Boston-area library.

What is the best way to determine if a journal is a refereed serial or a scholarly publication?

Most of the subscription databases available from the Sawyer Library enable the user to limit their searches to "peer reviewed," or "refereed publications," or "scholarly publications" by indicating so on the basic or advanced search screens. For example, you may check "Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals" and the database will limit the results returned to peer reviewed articles (see red rectangular box):



Searching: **Business Source Complete** | [Choose Databases >](#)

[Search Options](#) | [Advanced Search](#) | [Visual Search](#) | [Search History/](#)

Search Options

Search modes ?

- Boolean/Phrase
- Find all my search terms
- Find any of my search terms
- SmartText Searching [Hint](#)

Apply related words

Also search within the full text of the articles

Limit your results

Full Text

Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals

References Available

Published Date from

You may also consult the document type indicated in the description of each journal found in the online version of Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory (available from the Sawyer Library's list of databases). For example, we searched for the Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization. Note in the red rectangle that the Document type is "academic/scholarly," and is refereed.

U L R I C H ' S PERIODICALS DIRECTORY™ HOME

The global source for periodicals information since 1932

[Advanced Search](#)

Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization

[BACK TO RESULTS](#)

Basic Description | Other Editions/Formats | Abstracting/Indexing & Article Access | Publisher & Ordering Information

JCR®Web | ScienceDirect®

Click highlighted text for a new search on that item.

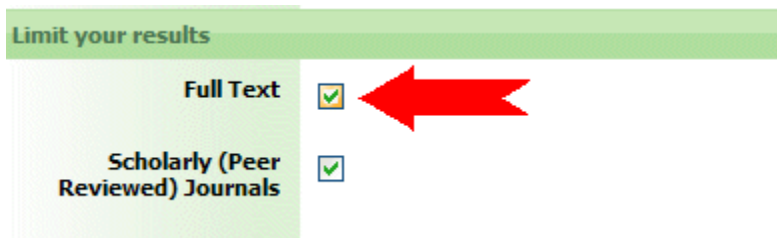
Table of Contents: [Click here to view](#)

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Refereed:	Yes
Abstracted/Indexed:	Yes

When in doubt about the scholarship of an article or journal, ASK A LIBRARIAN!

Hints for Effective Searching in Databases

- a bibliographic citation will tell you much, including the related subject headings
- an abstract will usually provide you with enough information to determine if you should read the full text of the source abstracted
- you may be able to limit your search results to refereed, academic or scholarly publication articles by checking the search box for "Peer Reviewed" (or synonym).
- most of the subscription databases available from the Sawyer Library enable the user to further limit their searches to just articles with "full text" content. For example:



The Web

The World Wide Web is a huge, fascinating network of computers with literally billions of bits of information and data in a multiplicity of formats. Unfortunately, there is no quality control on the Web; anyone can "publish" anything at anytime.

Web search tools include:

- Web directories
- search engines
- search guides on Sawyer Library's Web site, and searching hints

Web Directories as a Search Tool

A web directory is a service that offers a collection of links to Internet resources submitted by site creators or evaluators and organized into subject categories, much like library catalogs. Directory services use selection criteria for choosing links to include, although the selectivity varies among services. Most directories include a search engine to query the directory service.

Commercial directories cater to the general public and are competing for user traffic (helps when selling advertisement space). Academic and professional directories are often created and maintained by subject experts to support the needs of researchers.

Yahoo! is one of the most recognized of the commercial web directories. It does not evaluate content, but categorizes web sites submitted into subject areas.

The Internet Public Library (<http://www.ipl.org/>) is an example of an academic web directory of selective subject collections that have been evaluated and annotated for academic researchers by the IPL staff.

Web Search Engines as a Search Tool

A search engine is a keyword searchable database of Internet files collected by a computer program, such as a robot or a spider. Indexing, such as by title, is created from the collected files.

There are hundreds of web search engines; a popular engine is Google.

When to Use a Directory; When to Use a Search Engine

Those who frequently use the Web have developed personal preferences in their searching strategies. However, the success in searching the Web is often based upon the searching tool you use: a Web directory or a Web search engine.

When to use a Directory

- when you have a broad or general topic or idea to research
- when you want to see a list of sites on your topic often recommended and annotated by experts

When to use a Search Engine

- when you have a narrow topic or idea to research
- when you want to pinpoint a specific piece of information
- when you want to retrieve a large number of documents on your topic
- when you want to search for particular types of documents, file types (such as photographs), source locations, languages, etc.

If you are clear about the topic of your query, start with a directory rather than a search engine. Directories will usually not return as many references as a search engine, but the results will more likely be related to your topic. If you are searching for an academic topic, start with The Internet Public Library; if you are looking for a general, broad topic, start with Yahoo!.

The Sawyer Library's Web Guides

The Sawyer Library carefully reviews and chooses the information it acquires and to which it provides access, such as the subscription databases. We make every effort to identify, acquire, and provide only verifiable, quality information resources through our collections to support the curriculum.

We have also developed and updated guides to help students find information on the Web.

- Help and Research Guides (<http://www.suffolk.edu/sawlib/guidlst.htm>): guides that identify and annotate information resources related to the topic of the specific guide.
- Full Text Web Collections (<http://www.suffolk.edu/sawlib/webcollect.htm>): a Web page that identifies academic sources with full text collections.
- Recommended Academic Subject Web Directories (<http://www.suffolk.edu/sawlib/acad-dir.htm>): a Web page that identifies subject directories with links to appropriate subject- and topic-oriented World Wide Web sites to use for research that have been reviewed by librarians or others knowledgeable of the topic area.

Hints

The Sawyer Library staff is aware that we cannot meet every information need for every student on all subjects, and that the Web is an enticing source of information. Knowing that, we strongly recommend following these steps to conduct an information search:

- use ARCHER, the online catalog, to search for information resources owned by the Sawyer Library, and other Suffolk University libraries
- use our subscription databases
- refer to our internally-developed selected web site and research guides (identified above)
- ask a Reference Librarian
- then, go to the Web