Top tips for finding high quality scholarly resources

Use Library databases to find scholarly resources

- Resources in Library databases are scholarly and high quality. Scholarly works are written by experts in the field and are subjected to scholarly publishing standards such as peer review (for journals and conference papers) or editorial processes (for books) to ensure quality and accuracy.
- Peer review is a process where experts in the subject area assess and concur with the validity of the methodology and the findings of the article before it is published.
- If you’re using web resources (via Google or Google Scholar) use this guide to evaluate the credibility of your sources <http://flinders.libguides.com/evaluate>.
- Use all databases (including Google Scholar) via the Library homepage (Databases A-Z link). This:
  - Stops you being asked to pay for articles.
  - Makes sure the FindIt@Flinders link is visible in the database to link to you to full text where available.

Find your database

Find the right database for you in the Search Smart Subject Guides for your topic area. The ‘Articles’ or ‘Database’ pages on your topic guide will list suitable databases for your topic area.

Frequently used, large, multidisciplinary databases include Scopus, Web of Science and ProQuest.
- Scopus and Web of Science are good databases for Science, Technology (inc. Computer Science/Engineering), Medicine, Social Sciences, and has some coverage of the Arts & Humanities.
- ProQuest is a largely Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences focused multidisciplinary database with coverage of Science, Technology (inc. Computer Science/Engineering), Medicine.

Plan your search

- Look at your research question and break it down into key concepts.
- Think up alternate keywords for your concept terms.
- To find terms start with some scoping searches in the Library search engine, Google or Google Scholar, see what kinds of terms you find and add these to your list of terms.

Use search strategies to improve your search results

- Phrase search – Use double quotes around a phrase to clip the words together e.g. “sustainable development”.
- Truncation * – Cuts a word short and finds the alternate endings of the word, e.g. develop* finds develop, develops, developmental, developing, development and any other variation.
- OR – Use this to search for synonyms/alternate terms of your key concepts. It finds articles with either search term and broadens your search. Use brackets around the search terms when you use OR, e.g. (“global warming” OR “climate change”).
- AND – Use this to combine you search concepts, it’s used to link different concepts together and narrows your search, e.g. (“global warming” AND effects).
- Go to Library guide for more help creating your search strategies <http://flinders.libguides.com/searchstrategies>.
Use databases effectively

Use limits on left hand to narrow your search results
- Limit by date, subject heading, keyword, article or document type (reviews), author or use the ‘search within’ search box to narrow by keyword.
- You can use multiple limits to target your search effectively and narrow results.

Subject headings
Articles included in databases are indexed by experts in the topic area and are then assigned subject categories. This can be a useful way of limiting your search results and also find new terms to add to your search.

Reviews
Reviews are a summary of the current state of the research in the field.
- They provide an easy to read overview of the current field of research; they do not report on new original research.
- The references are an excellent source of high quality, relevant, scholarly material vetted by experts in the field.

Highly Cited Articles
- An article that is highly cited indicates that the work is important to the field of research. It is a measure of how much other scientists are discussing this research. It is not a comment on the validity of the research but rather of its importance to the field. That is to say, you can’t tell if the commentary on the article is good or bad simply by the number of times it’s cited. You will need to look at the articles that are citing it to see what they are saying about the research.
- Highly cited articles are often older because citations take time to accrue, so while a high number of citations indicates the article is important, you will also need to look at newer articles to find out what is currently happening in the field of research. You can do this by looking at the articles that have cited the highly cited article.
- Cited by lists help identify newer research that is building on or challenging the original highly cited article. It can be a quick way to find newer relevant research on the topic.
- Citation rates – Do not assume that newly published articles with no or few citations are not good quality scholarly articles. Keep in mind that citations take time to accrue so newer articles are unlikely to have had time to be cited regardless of their quality.

Follow the references
If you find a high quality article that is on target for your search, look at the articles that the database finds associated with it.
- Look at the article’s references, related references and cited by references.

Alerts, saved searches and saved lists
Register for an account in each database to use these features.
- Set up alerts. If you get good results with a search, you can set up an alert and the database will email you citations of newly published material. There are fewer records, making it easier to identify relevant material to add to your body of knowledge.
- Save useful articles to lists. You can use this to keep track of useful articles and to bulk export citations into a bibliographic management system like EndNote.
- Save searches to keep track of your search terms and strategies.
Use bibliographic management systems effectively

Use a bibliographic management system like EndNote to manage and annotate your records. Flinders University supports EndNote for staff and postgraduate students. Training is available to staff and research higher degree students. The software is freely available to Flinders University staff and students. Go to this link for more information: [http://www.flinders.edu.au/library/endnote/](http://www.flinders.edu.au/library/endnote/).

- Use databases to export citations into the bibliographic management system.
- Import PDFs from within EndNote.
- Annotate your records with your own notes (EndNote allows you to search the record information, PDFs and any notes or comments you make).
- You can make note of the relevancy of the article for your research needs by creating a system hierarchy of importance. This will help you manage your reading and workload later. You can invent one yourself or use a simple star system.

Here’s an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Highly related, must read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Closely related, should read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Loosely related, might read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not closely related, read abstract, save to refer to later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not loosely related, need to know it exists but probably won’t refer to later.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How and why you’ve included the article in your library of literature is dependent on your needs, ultimately this is a way for you to manage how you prioritise your workload for reading.

Images


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