

Finding Periodical Articles

"Periodicals" are publications that appear on a regular schedule (magazines, journals, newspapers)

One of the biggest changes ever in library research has been the ability to get the full text of periodical articles using computerized services. Previously researchers were largely limited to the paper magazines a library subscribed to. Online full-text periodical databases have greatly expanded access to articles.

Why use periodicals?

Periodicals cover events more quickly and concisely than books. Books are usually better at giving thoughtful, historical information. Magazines and newspapers provide current, focused information, and specialized magazines and journals provide in-depth coverage.

Periodical articles are usually on specific topics. Many topics do not have entire books written about them (or the specific information you need is buried within a book). However periodical articles are often about very specific topics. For example, our library only lists four books on the topic of "fire ants," but one of our databases has over 200 articles on this topic.

Periodicals are more likely to cover local and state topics. It isn't likely that a national publisher is going to write about local topics, such as the pollution of Barton Springs, but there will be many articles in newspapers and magazines.

How do I start?

Step 1: Choose a topic

You must have some sort of topic to begin research. However, it will often evolve as you do the research.

Step 2: Choose keywords

Keywords describe your topic. Choosing good keywords can have a huge effect on getting good results. Computerized databases are literal; they will only locate material that exactly matches your keywords.

Start out being as specific as possible. If you need more, try more general words.

Step 3: Select a Database

Databases list periodical articles that match your keywords. Some databases are general, good for almost any topic. (*Academic Search Complete* is an example.) Other databases concentrate on more specific topics (such as *Computer Source*). Most of the databases at ACC include the complete text of the articles.

Step 4: Evaluate your results

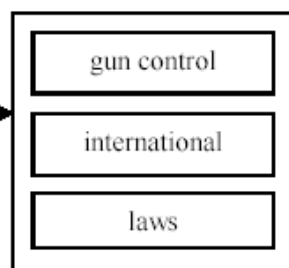
Once you locate the articles, you must decide which ones match your needs. See the section on the back page entitled "Which articles should I choose?" Remember, just because you found it doesn't mean it's useful.

For example:

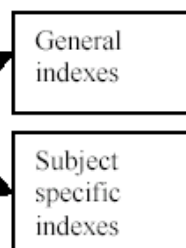
Your topic

"Gun control laws in other countries"

Search terms



Select databases



Articles



Which database do I use?

The ACC libraries have over 50 online databases. These can be accessed directly from the library computers. The web page that lists these is: http://alicat.austincc.edu/screens/srchhelp_y.html

These databases are restricted to ACC students and staff. If you want to access them from off-campus, you will use your ACCeID.

Which articles should I choose?

When looking at a list of periodical articles such as the one below, you can begin to decide which ones are more likely to be useful.

Name of periodical - Most periodicals have a slant or specialized audience.

Date - Most databases list the most recent articles first. How important is recent information is for your topic?

Length of article - Articles shorter than one page are usually not useful for research projects. Some articles may be longer than you need for a small research question. (The length given refers to the original paper version.)

[Multilateral Cooperation on Small Arms and Light Weapons: From Crisis to Collective Response](#); By: Dhanapala, Jayantha., Brown Journal of World Affairs, Spring2002, Vol. 9 Issue 1, p163, 9p
PDF Full Text (1.2MB)

[Gun Talk](#); Outdoor Life, May2002, Vol. 209 Issue 3, p16, 1/3p
HTML Full Text PDF Full Text (262K)

Excerpt courtesy of EBSCO Publishing

Popular vs. scholarly articles

There is often a large difference between popular magazines and scholarly journals. Magazines don't require deep background knowledge of a topic. Magazines also often cover a wide variety of subjects in each issue (such as *Newsweek*) or may specialize (*Sports Illustrated*). They may cover serious issues, but entertaining the reader is first priority. Journals are written by and for scholars and emphasize original research. Facts and analysis are stressed over entertainment. In the database listing above, the first article would be a journal article, the second one a magazine article. For more on this, see the Library Guides "Finding Periodical Articles" (<http://researchguides.austincc.edu/content.php?pid=41933&hs=a&gid=388>).

What if I can't find enough articles on my topic?

- ◆ Try different keywords. It's pretty unusual to not be able to find something.
- ◆ Try a different database.
- ◆ Talk to a librarian. ACC students can get a TexShare card, which allows access to many other libraries, including the University of Texas.