

PSYX 320 Research Methods III: Research Strategies, Autumn 2011

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Psychology online research guide: <http://libguides.lib.umn.edu/psychology>

Professor Nabil Haddad initially developed these instructions. I have modified and updated the steps based on library web site changes. Remember that web site and database interfaces continually change. If or when changes occur the steps you take to access PsycINFO or to search the database may be different. Once you know searching concepts and the way the database is organized you will be able to find your way.

How to Access and Use PsycINFO

1. Start at the Mansfield Library webpage: <http://www.lib.umn.edu/>
2. Select the “Databases, A-Z” link.
3. Select the “P” tab. Find and select the “PsychINFO” link. Note that you can also find PsycINFO by selecting “Databases by Subject” link followed by “Psychology”.

There are three main search options in PsycINFO: Quick, Advanced, and Command.

For the purpose of this example we will use the topic *television violence*.

Quick Search

1. Allows you to enter a term and the database searches all fields of data (e.g., title, author, abstract, publication source)
 - You can do a basic search by keyword
 - A search with the term television violence results in 1,457 items: journal articles, books/book reviews, and book chapters/essays. Unless you have time to go through this long list you will want to be more specific.

Advanced Search

1. Allows you to build a search based on the various facets of your topic. You can also limit your search in many ways, such as by publication data, publication type, population of study, and more.
 - You can search for television violence as one facet of your topic, and focus it to look at the relationship between television violence and adolescents. You would enter adolescents in the second search box. This search results in 787 results.
 - To further refine the search you can limit the “Date Range” to “2001-2011” which yields 684 publications.
 - You can continue to refine. For example, if you select “Female” as the “Population” leads to 289 items. If I change from using keywords to using descriptors for the search, such as television viewing (in one search box) and violence (in another search box) I hone my search further and find 7 results.
2. The More Info, the Better
 - The more specific the search, the better your results will be in finding the articles you want.
 - Remember that research is an iterative process!

Command Search and Combine Searches

1. Command search will be less help to you than the Advanced Search. Command search requires that you use coding for search fields (e.g., TI = title). Doctoral students and faculty members are the groups that usually use this search feature.
2. The ability to combine more than one search may be a feature you want to consider using.

Marking titles

As you read through titles, mark the titles by clicking on the left margin boxes. Be sure to select “Update Marked List” at the top of the results page before moving on to the next page of results. Once you have gone through all the records, click on “marked records” and you can read through the abstracts of those you marked by clicking on “detailed records” and or you can print the records off.

Another option is for you to create a RefWorks or EndNote Web account (via the library). These reference management software tools allow you to maintain a personal account of your references and easily format bibliographies and in-text citations for research papers and projects. If you choose RefWorks at the top of the PsycINFO results page this will lead you to a page where you can set up an account. If you choose to use EndNote Web you will want to select “Save, Print, Email” from the top of the results page, then Save. This will save a file of the article data that you will then need to import into EndNote Web. You can access both RefWorks and EndNote Web from the “Databases, A-Z” link on the library homepage.

Obtaining the Full-Text Articles You Find in PsycINFO

Once you have searched, read the abstracts of one or more of the articles to determine those that interest you and meet the needs of your assignment.

In some cases you will see links under the article information that read “ Full-Text HTML” or “Full-Text PDF”, either of these links will lead you directly to the full text of the article.

If you do not see either of the full text links, select “Link to Article” under the item abstract to determine if the library can provide you online access to the article and or if there is a paper copy of the journal in the library building.

If you select “Link to Article” and the article is available electronically in another database you will see this information under “Step 1: Get the full electronic article.” From here, select “Get Article.”

If you select “Link to Article” and the article is only available as a paper copy in the library there will not be any information under step 1, and you should go to “Step 2. Get a paper copy in the library.” When you select the “By title” link you will be taken into the library catalog and see the information about the journal: the level that the journal is located on (usually level 5 – although sometimes level 2) and the call number. Use this information to find the journals on the shelf in the building. It is important to write down the information that is provided about the article under “Important Citation Information” including the volume, issue and page number of the journal in which the article was published.

If the library does not have the article you want online or in the building move to “Step 3: No online or paper copy available?” and select “Request the article from another library.” This will lead to the Interlibrary Loan service where you can request that the article be borrowed from another library for you. This is a service that you have already paid for through your tuition dollars. Do use it for this class or other purposes.