Searching for articles in online journal databases

There are several approaches to searching for journal articles starting from our Library Home page:

**Summon.** Search for journal, magazine, and newspaper articles as well as books. If you want only journal articles, you can limit your search. Summon is multidisciplinary and can be a great place to start your search. However, if you do search Summon for journal articles and do not find enough information or are not finding the right kind of information, consider searching some of our databases in addition. Otherwise, you may miss some important resources. Learn more about Summon from our guide.

**Databases:** Search for journal articles and more. This tutorial is an introduction to using online databases to search for journal articles in geography. We suggest you work through each step on a computer. You'll learn a lot more that way than you will by just reading it!

Plan your search strategy by identifying the key concepts in your topic.

Example topic: You are taking a class in urban geography. Your assignment is to “Discuss the relationship between urban planning and human health.”

There are two concepts in this search.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept 1</th>
<th>Concept 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>urban planning</td>
<td>health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List any related terms or synonyms for each concept where applicable.

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>urban planning</td>
<td>health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>city planning</td>
<td>well being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban sprawl</td>
<td>obesity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[There are other terms that could be generated under each concept. To demonstrate, let’s keep this search fairly simple.]

Construct your search using Boolean logic.

To construct your search, you need to know a little bit about Boolean searching.

- Boolean searching means that you can combine terms in a precise manner. Searches can be as simple as a single word or include combinations of several terms or phrases.
- Boolean operators are used to join the concepts and synonyms in this search.
- There are two main Boolean operators or command terms: **AND, OR**
Combining terms using AND and OR.

- When there are several synonyms or related terms for one idea, use parentheses ( ) to group these terms together. This is called “nesting.”
  
  **E.g.** We generated several terms in addition to urban planning; these were city planning and urban sprawl. We want to group these terms together, so (urban planning or city planning or urban sprawl)

- This group of nested terms can then be combined in a search with other single or nested terms.
  
  **E.g.** We want the idea of “urban planning” in relation to health. We also generated some terms related to health: these were “well being” or obesity. These terms are grouped together (health or well being or obesity).

  **Hint:** Many databases require that phrases, such as “well being”, be enclosed in quotation marks. Common phrases are “World Health Organization” “First Nations” “United States.”
  
  **Hint:** Most databases allow you to “truncate” a term. This means you can add a symbol to the root of a word and the system will pick up all variations on that term. The * is often the truncation symbol. E.g. “urban plan*” will retrieve “urban plan” “urban planning” “urban plans” etc.

  - Always check the help screen of the database you’re in to determine how to properly construct your search.

- Our urban planning and health search would be represented in Boolean logic as follows. Truncation symbols have been added as have quotations around phrases:

  ("urban plan*" or "city plan*" or "urban sprawl") and (health or “well being” or obesity)

**Choose a database that covers your discipline.**

- Go to the Library homepage, [www.uregina.ca/library](http://www.uregina.ca/library) and choose the Databases tab.
• Survey the range of subjects covered by the Library’s databases by scrolling through the drop-down menu beside “Find Database by Subject.”

• Databases are grouped together under broad subject headings. Choose Geography.

Click Find.

Choose Geography from list of subjects. Click Find.
An alphabetical list of databases dealing with the subject will appear. Reading the description can help you decide which database(s) might be useful.

In this tutorial, we’re going to search a database called Geobase. Scroll down in the list and click “Geobase” to begin searching.

**HINT:** If you are linking to a database from off campus, a pop-up screen asking you to log in will appear. Use either of the login methods, click Submit Query, and you will see the database search page.

Here’s what the login screen looks like:
Once you are in the database, begin searching:

Enter your search terms

Our sample search is: (“urban plan*” or “city plan*” or “urban sprawl”) and (health or “well being” or obesity)

Geobase opens in **Quick Search** mode. As with any database, it’s a good idea to “orient” yourself before you search.

- Initially, the search boxes in this mode are set to search terms in **All Fields**. This is a broad search because it picks up records that contain our terms anywhere. Let’s try focusing the search a bit by setting the **Search In** drop-down menu on **Abstract**.
- The **Abstract** is the summary of what the article is about. We are searching for terms that appear in that summary only. Searching in **specific fields** can help focus a search.
- **N.B.** Read the database Help screens to find out if there is a truncation/wildcard symbol and whether phrases must be enclosed in quotation marks.

Enter search terms

“urban plan*” or “city plan*” or “urban sprawl”
health or “well being” or obesity

- Note that the **GeoBase Quick Search** has templates that do some of the work of Boolean search construction for you. You do not need, for example, to “nest” your similar terms in brackets and the placement of AND has already been done for you.
- Many databases allow you to set limits on your search. In some databases, you can limit a search to retrieve only articles that are full-text on that database. Other databases also offer a limit to “peer reviewed” journals only. **Geobase** offers several limits.
- The document type has been limited to **Journal Article**.
View Your Results and Manage Information

- A successful search produces a results list which contains references (citations) to documents matching your search criteria.
- This search produced a number of article citations.
- Some articles will be available full-text on GeoBase. These articles are indicated with a Full-text icon. Let's look at the article entitled “Effects of urban sprawl on obesity” by clicking on the Full-text icon.

At the next screen, click on the PDF icon. You can print or download PDF files. To e-mail PDF files, it is best to download them to the desktop and send as an e-mail attachment.
• If the full-text of an article is not included with the citation, the Library may still carry the journal. Click on the Abstract for more information.
• This record from our search has no Full-text indicator.

When an article is not full text on the database you are searching, check to see if there are links that can help you determine if the library has it elsewhere. In this example, you would click on Where can I get this?
• Clicking on the **Where Can I Get This?** link activates a search of the library’s journal collection.

• A screen appears that indicates whether or not the library has the journal. If the article is full-text in another database, there will be a link to that database. In this case, the library does not carry this journal. You could, however, order the journal article through our Interlibrary Loans department. If the library does carry the journal, check to ensure that we have the correct volume, issue and year.

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**Need Help? Consult Marilyn Andrews, Geography Librarian**

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**Office Hours:** (Archer Library LY 107.23): Weekdays 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Appointments Recommended

**OR Library Information Desk staff.**

**Visit us:** Main floor of the Archer Library  
**Voice:** 585-4495/4134  
**E-mail:** ask.archer@uregina.ca

**Chat:** Click the [Instant messaging](#) link on the Library Home Page.