How to Locate Periodical Articles

**What is a periodical?** A publication that comes out at regular intervals (weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.). It can be a magazine, journal, or newspaper.

The library has some print periodicals. Most often, you will find individual articles in online databases accessed through the library website: [www.mcckc.edu/library/maple-woods](http://www.mcckc.edu/library/maple-woods)

**What is a citation?** The information needed to find or describe an article: the author, title of the article, title of the periodical, date, pages (and which database you searched, if applicable).

Most of the databases offer a citation tool. However, these tools can make mistakes, and the citation may not be in the most recent format. The reference side of the library has handouts/guides to the APA, MLA, and Chicago citation styles.

**What is an abstract?** A short summary of an article.

**What is the difference between the Online Databases and an Internet search?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Databases</th>
<th>Web</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library pays for subscription</td>
<td>Freely available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains articles and reference information</td>
<td>Contains all kinds of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information has been edited and fact-checked</td>
<td>Information may or may not be reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation tool included</td>
<td>You must construct citation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always provide a date</td>
<td>May or may not provide a date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports precise searching and filtering</td>
<td>Difficult to sort results</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Searching the Databases**

- Use only the key concepts/words as search terms. (Example: Facebook, depression, not ‘Can Facebook cause depression?’)
- Connect these with the word **“and”**. (Example: Facebook **and** depression)
- Use related words or synonyms to revise your search as needed.

**Are you getting too many articles?**

- Limit to “full text.”
- Many databases allow you to narrow by periodical type (magazine, newspaper, or journal) and/or publication date within your search results.
- Add more search terms using **“and”**. (Example: single mothers **and** finance)
- Use **“not”** to narrow your search by excluding search terms. (Example: apple **not** computer)
- Use quotation marks around phrases, especially names.
- Use narrower, more specific terms. (Example: Persian cats instead of cats)

**How does “and” work?**

“**and**” = fewer results, because both criteria have to be true

Use to connect key words so you search for all parts of your research question

(Example: “social media” **and** depression)
Are you not getting enough articles?

- Try synonyms and related terms including those suggested by the databases.
- Use fewer search terms.
- Use “or” to broaden your search. (Example: movies or films or motion pictures)
- Check your spelling or use alternative spellings.
- Use broader search terms. (Example: student financial aid rather than student loans)
- Use truncation. (Example: comput* will bring up articles with the words compute, computers, computing, or any word that begins with that root.)
- Try a different database or ask a librarian for a recommendation.

How does “or” work?

“or” = more results, because either or both of the criteria can be true

Use to connect synonyms/related terms so you find results with either word

(Example: USA or “United States”)

Evaluating What You Find

- Read the abstract for a short summary of the article to determine if it is relevant.
- Is the author identified? Are credentials listed? (Look at end of article or bottom of first page.)
- Check the date for currency. Is this important for your topic?
- Look at the length of the article. Is it long enough to provide sufficient content?
- Who is the intended audience? (Determine the level of language: easy? general adult? scholarly?)
- Does the article contain a list of references at the end?
- What is the purpose of the article: to inform? persuade? entertain?
- What type of publication is it: scholarly? professional? general interest? news magazine?
- Does the publication that the article is in have a bias? Does it present different points of view?

Ask a librarian for help selecting the right database for your needs.