

Using Databases

Goals: Students will understand the purpose/function of databases, learn how they differ from Google, begin choosing databases appropriate to a different topics, use different databases to find research articles, and present a short list of articles in a specific bibliographic format. *Optionally*, the students will write rudimentary annotations for the articles they find.

Outcomes:

- Students will use the search features on the library's database list to identify at least four databases appropriate to the course discipline.
- Students will perform keyword searches on at least two databases in order to retrieve at least four research articles (two from each database) relevant to their research topics.
- Students will write accurate citations for the four retrieved articles in a style specified by the professor in order to begin creating a bibliography.
- *Optional:* Students will answer three specific questions about each source in order to begin writing annotations that will help them learn to assess the relative value of each item.

Materials:

- Instruction room with computers.
- Examples of print indexes for effect and history.
- It is helpful if the students come to class with an idea of what their final research topic will be.
- *Optional:* Handout on writing citations and annotations.

Time Required: 25 minutes maximum/15 minutes minimum

Lesson:

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|------------|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5
min. | { | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a database? Why are databases needed? • What is the difference between scholarly databases and Google/Google Scholar (scope, cost of information, targeted searching based on database subject coverage, etc.) |
| 4
min. | { | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to access databases at Dickinson (Database List). • How to use the search features to find an appropriate database (also stress the need to ask for help as the search functions may not be 100% accurate – librarians can always suggest good alternatives). |
| 6
min. | { | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose one general purpose database and one subject specific database for brief demonstration. • How to search in a database, interpret the results screen and get more details about each item. |
| 10
min. | { | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action: Students will choose a database and begin to search for articles in the classroom. • Discussion: Librarian will explain the assignment, particularly the requirement that the retrieved items be cited appropriately. Discuss the annotation if elected. <i>Handout on citing and annotating (optional) to be provided.</i> |

Assignment/Assessment:

- Students will identify the names of four databases appropriate to the topic of study, and use at least two of them to locate 4 articles relevant to their final project. For *each* article (total of 4), students should provide a photocopy or printout of the first page of the article; a citation in correct format as specified by the professor, and the name of the database in which the article was found.
- Optionally, students will answer the following questions about each source: 1) Who is the author/What are his/her credentials? 2) What is the thesis and main points 3) How could this article support a research paper?
- Students will write down at least one thing about this lesson that was difficult, or that was not understood; and one that was new/previously unknown.

Using Databases Assignment

Librarian: _____

Due Date: _____

Professor: _____

Please perform ALL of the tasks on this list. For this assignment, you may not work in groups or share answers.

- ☐ Use the Search feature on the library's database list to identify four (4) databases that may cover your research paper. List the names of the databases.
- ☐ Choose one of the databases you found and find two (2) articles that deal with your topic.
- ☐ Choose a second (different) database and find two (2) more articles that deal with your topic.
- ☐ For EACH article you find, do the following:
 - 1) Provide a citation in the correct bibliographic [Chicago/MLA, etc.] format.
 - 2) Below each citation, answer the following questions. Questions should be answered in *complete sentences*.
 - Who is the author of the article and what are his/her credentials and expertise in this area of study?
 - What is the thesis statement of the article/What research question is the author trying to answer? What main points does the author address?
 - How does the *content* of this article compare or contrast with the others on your list? Be specific and use examples.
 - 3) List the name of the database in which you found the article.
 - 4) Photocopy or print out the first page of the article.
- ☐ Write down at least one thing about this lesson that was difficult, or that you did not understand; and one thing you learned that you did not know before.