

UGS 303: Sustaining a Planet, Dr. Banner & Dr. Allen, Fall 2008

Research Guide: Find a Peer-Reviewed Article

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Turn Your Topic into a Search

Library databases work differently than Google – so you'll need to search them in a different way. You first need to break your topic down into concepts and brainstorm alternate keywords (search terms). Make sure your search terms include broader, narrower and related terms, as well as different aspects of the topic.

Example:

Topic: Melting permafrost from global warming releases methane emissions.

| | Concept 1: permafrost | AND | Concept 2: global warming | AND | Concept 3: methane |
|---|-----------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|--------------------|
| O | tundra | | climate change | | natural gas |
| | arctic | | greenhouse effect | | carbon |
| R | glacial ice | | | | Marsh gas |
| | frozen soil | | | | |

Find Articles (Databases and Indexes to Articles)

➤ Start here: www.lib.utexas.edu > Research Tools > [Databases and Indexes to Articles](#)

Step 1: Choose a database

Some databases are **multi-disciplinary** and contain both peer-reviewed and non-scholarly articles from across disciplines. Others only cover material from a **specific discipline or subject**, such as geology or environmental science. You can find a list of all databases at www.lib.utexas.edu/indexes, arranged alphabetically and by subject. To find out what a database contains, click on the **About** link next to the database name.

Multidisciplinary:

- [Academic Search Complete](#) and [Academic OneFile](#): Find scholarly and non-scholarly articles from across disciplines.

Hint: In both of these databases, you can narrow your search results to scholarly journals by checking a box on the search page.

Subject-specific:

- [Environmental Issues and Policy Index](#): Find citations to articles in the area of environmental policy and studies

- **GeoRef:** Find citations to peer-reviewed geosciences articles and reports, including all publications of the U.S. Geological Survey
- **Databases by Subject:** Choose a database by academic discipline to search the literature of that field. Environmental Studies, Ecology, Geology, Geography and Marine Science may be relevant subjects
- Ask your professor or TA for **other recommendations**.

Step 2: Search the database using AND and OR


When you begin searching in the library databases, you will construct your searches using **AND** and **OR**.

- **AND** narrows your results by returning only those articles that include all your keywords.
- **OR** broadens your results by returning those articles that include any of your keywords.

Example: permafrost AND methane AND global warming

Step 3: Find the full article

If the article is not full-text in the database you are searching, you have two options:

- 1) Follow the  link to see if it is available in another database or in print in the library.

OR

- 2) Search for the title of the journal (not the title of the article) in the [Library Catalog](#) (use both boxes) to see if it is available electronically or in print.

Step 4: Determine if the article is peer-reviewed

Use the search tips in Step 1 to limit to scholarly publications, or choose a subject-database that only contains scholarly journals. If you aren't sure whether or not a publication is scholarly, check [Ulrich's Periodical Directory Online](#) (www.lib.utexas.edu/indexes > U). This is also a good place to look for information about the purpose of a journal.

Hint: Not all articles in scholarly journals are peer-reviewed. For example, some scholarly journals include news items, book reviews and letters which are not peer-reviewed. If you are having trouble deciding whether an article is peer-reviewed, ask a librarian or your TA.

Useful Resources

- **Ask A Librarian,** www.lib.utexas.edu/ask - research help via chat, email, telephone or in-person
- **NoodleBib,** www.lib.utexas.edu/noodlebib - create MLA-formatted bibliographies that you can download in Word and turn in with your paper.
- **For Undergraduates,** www.lib.utexas.edu/students - guides to help you find and evaluate information on any topic.