

How to: find information sources for a literature review

EDGZ931

Searching for literature

Identifying literature located in journal articles, books and conference proceedings involves searching Library catalogues and databases. The sheer quantity of information available via these sources requires effective strategies to search and locate information. Essential elements that support effective literature searching are

- developing fundamental search skills
- utilising appropriate tools to locate the literature on your topic
- keeping up to date and managing information

1. Effective search skills

- a) Develop a list of potential keywords, synonyms and related words relevant to your topic.

Start by recording the keywords in your topic and brainstorm a list of other potentially useful keywords including broader and narrower terms, related terms and synonyms.

Example topic:

Classroom strategies for teaching English as a second language.

Keyword 1	OR	Keyword 2	OR	Keyword 3
English as a second language		ESL		Second language acquisition
Classroom strategies		Classroom techniques		Class organisation
Teaching		teach		Learn
Optional keyword Case study		interviews		Focus groups

Note: research methods can also be used as keywords e.g. survey, quantitative research, qualitative research. This will help to limit your results to those reporting research undertaken.

Activity:

Use this [planner](#) to record your topic keywords and alternative words.

- b) Use truncation and wildcards to replace one or more letters in a search word.

	Example	Potential result
Truncation Symbol used at the end of a word or word stem to find variations	Child*	Child Children Children's
	Class*	Class Classes Classroom
Wildcard Used to replace a single letter	Organi?e	Organise Organize

Note: truncation and wildcard symbols vary, see [database help guides](#).

Activity:

Check the keyword list you have started to compile for places that truncation or wildcard symbols may be used.

- c) Use boolean connectors when you have more than one search term

AND	Requires both terms to be present	Esl and classroom
OR	Requires either tem to be present	Esl or English as a second language

[See how connectors work](#).

Activity:

Reflect on the placement of the connectors on the search planner you have developed.

2. Tools for locating the literature

- Databases
- Library Catalogues
- Checking reference lists or bibliographies
- Internet

a. Databases

Library databases provide access to journal and newspaper articles and may also include a range of information sources such as conference papers, electronic books or theses.

A range of databases can be accessed through the UOW Library website (see links below.)

Activity:

Look at the list of databases provided for topic areas below. Record databases to try first.

- [Education](#)
- [Adult Education](#)
- [Early Childhood](#)
- [Educational Leadership](#)
- [Educational Research](#)
- [ICT](#)
- [Language Literacy](#)
- [Mathematics](#)
- [Physical Education](#)
- [Primary Education](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Special Education](#)
- [TESOL](#)

Activity:

Connect to the complete [list of databases for the Education Faculty](#).

Look at the “Notes Field” to see the subjects, countries and dates covered by each database to identify any other *potentially* useful databases for your topic.

Note: key education databases to include are [A+Education](#) and [ERIC](#).

b. Searching a database

Library databases can be searched using the **keywords** and **connectors** you have identified above. Below is an example of a search entered into the database A+Education.

The screenshot shows the search interface of the A+Education database. It features three tabs: "Search", "Indexes", and "Thesauri". The "Search" tab is active. The search query is displayed as follows:

Search Query:
esl or english as a second language
in any field
AND classroom management
in any field
AND interview* or focus group*
in any field

Below the query, there is a link to "Add more terms" and a "Search" button. At the bottom, there are checkboxes for "Full Content Records Only" and "Date Range: 1970 to 2008".

AND Connector: finds items that contain the three main concepts

OR Connector: find **either** term e.g. ESL or the phrase english as a second language

Truncation: interview* finds interview, interviews, interviewing



Activity:

View a database search [demonstration](#) in the Proquest database.

c. Finding the full text of an article

The above search in the database A+Education found many articles. Below is a description of one article. The full text link is indicated.

1 **Title:** Researching appropriate assessment for low/pre-literacy adult ESL learners : results, issues and challenges.
Personal Author: Moore S H
Author Affiliation: Macquarie University
Source: Prospect; v.22 n.2 p.25-38; 2007
Journal Title: Prospect
Volume: 22
Issue: 2
Pagination: 25-38
Document Type: Journal articles
Name of Publisher: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research
Date of Publication: 2007
Publication Year: 2007
Subject (Major): English (Second language); Literacy education; Student assessment; Student attitudes; Teacher attitudes
Subject (Minor): Adult education; Adults; Migrants
Identifier: Adult Migrant Education Program (Australia) (AMEP)
Abstract Indicator: Yes
Abstract: This paper reports on a two-year research project, funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (formerly known as Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs), which investigated the English language assessment of low and pre-literacy adult English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in Australia's Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP). The research involved a nationwide survey of AMEP teachers who teach low/pre-literacy learners, several first language (L1)-based focus groups and three case studies of individual learners at that level. The data collected from these sources then informed the development of an assessment technique grid (ATG), presented here, which links the AMEP curriculum framework's formal assessment tasks back to actual classroom activity types commonly used in ongoing assessment. The ATG provides a useful mechanism for systematising informal ongoing assessment and laying a foundation for formal assessment tasks. The paper highlights some of the key issues and challenges in researching language assessment at the low end of the proficiency scale; it also introduces the principal practical outcome of this particular project. [Author abstract]
Notes: Includes bibliographical references.
ISSN: 0814-7094
Full Text Indicator: Yes
Full Text: <http://search.informit.com.au.ezproxy.uow.edu.au:2048/fullText;res=AEIPT;dn=163874>
URI Indicator: Yes
Uniform Resource Identifier:
http://www.amepro.mq.edu.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0005/67055/Prospect_22_2_2_Moore.pdf
PI Indicator: No
Document Number: 163874

Complete Record |  Full Text PDF (1099kb) |  Full Text (external) | Browse Title

Database: A+ Education

Note: Some databases do not provide the full text of all articles.



View a [demonstration](#) of locating the full text of a known article

d. Library Catalogue

The Library catalogue lists all the resources held by the UOW Library at our various locations.

Activity:

Complete a keyword search on the catalogue to locate a range of books on your topic. The Library catalogue is located on the [Library's website](#).

e. Locating information found in reference lists and bibliographies

Locating information from the reference lists and bibliographies found in books and journal articles is an excellent method of identifying key authors or tracing the literature on a topic.

Activity:

Look at the following demonstrations that show how to search for known books and journal articles in the UOW Library catalogue.



- [Book and Book Chapter](#)
- [Journal Article](#)

f. Finding the fulltext of journal articles



Activity: view the demonstration of searching for known [journal articles](#).

g. Internet

Some research reports and conference papers may be freely available on the Internet. Use a search engine such as [Google](#) or [Google Scholar](#) to locate relevant items.

Note: anyone can publish information on the Internet. It is vital to evaluate any resources found.

Activity:

Reflect on the criteria found in this tutorial for [evaluating websites](#). Can you add any additional criteria?

3. Need more help?

A range of guides to finding information are available from the Library's website including

- [Online tutorials](#)
- [Email](#) a Librarian
- Contact your Faculty Librarian, [Bernadette Stephens](#)