



Cherry Hill Seminary
Judy Harrow Library and Information Center

Finding Academic Literature

A Student's Guide

As a student at Cherry Hill Seminary, access to books and articles – the literature of your field – is essential to your success. You may discover, however, that finding the literature you need is more complicated than finding a novel or a news article. Academic literature, since its potential audience is much smaller than popular fiction or nonfiction, tends to be printed in smaller batches and cost significantly more than popular-press material; it may also go out of print more quickly. Academic publishers are also much less likely to give away their material for free on the Internet, since they can't expect to recoup their costs through on-page advertising the way that a newspaper might. While we plan to add academic literature sources to the Judy Harrow Library as funding permits, it's unlikely that we'll be able to provide everything you need for your coursework in the immediate future. What to do?

Fortunately, there are public sources for a great deal of the academic literature. Making use of them might require a little more effort than simply doing a Google search, but knowing where to look can save you hours of frustration in searching – or hundreds of dollars in book-buying costs! The sections below will answer some of the more frequently-asked questions about finding academic literature.

Where can I find this book?

If you're trying to find a specific book – one from a class reading list, for example, or from the footnotes in another book you've been reading – the best place to start is with WorldCat (<http://www.worldcat.org>). WorldCat is a union catalog: it contains the collected information of hundreds of academic and public library catalogs, mostly from North America. Select the "Books" tab on the main page searchbar, and then enter the author's last name and the title of the book you're trying to find (*starhawk spiral dance* or *adler drawing down the moon*, for example). Select your book from the results list (there may be more than one entry, if the book has multiple editions; check the publication date to make sure you've got the right one) by clicking on the title of the book. This will bring you to the individual record for that book, which has a very useful feature: enter your ZIP code into the box marked "Enter your location" and WorldCat will tell you which libraries have a copy of that book, starting with the ones geographically closest to you. Each library on that list should have a "Library info" link on the far right, which will give you a link to the library's website; you should be able to find building hours and contact information for the library there. If you just need to take a look at a book for an hour and make some notes or photocopy a few pages, you might be able to find a nearby copy at a public library or a public university (see the "Using public university libraries" section below).

What if there's no copy of the book within a convenient distance, or you need to have a copy of the book on hand for several weeks? You may be able to get a loan of the book through your local public library using their Interlibrary Loan service. Print out the record page from WorldCat, or write down the title, author, publisher, publication date, and ISBN number from that page, and contact or visit your local library to arrange for a loan. Keep in mind that these loans often take days or even weeks to process, and that some college and university libraries are hesitant to lend books from their collection to public library users, so this is not a guaranteed path to success.

Where can I find this article?

If you're trying to find a copy of a specific article – one from a class reading list, for example, or from the footnotes of another work that you've been reading – I do not recommend simply searching in Google. Most of the time, your top hits from such a search will take you to a journal's website, where you will be asked to purchase a copy of the article for \$25 to \$50 or more. Unless you're independently wealthy, buying access to individual articles at those prices will quickly overwhelm your ability to pay. What else can you try?

You can use WorldCat to search for journals at other libraries, in the same way that you can use it to find books (as described above). The search technique is a little different, though: start from the main WorldCat page (<http://www.worldcat.org>) as before, but this time you'll want to use the "Everything" option on the searchbar. Enter the name of the journal that contains the article you want: for example, if I'm looking for Richard Hall's article "The Polytheism of William James" from the Spring 2009 issue of *The Pluralist*, I would search for *the pluralist* instead of *hall polytheism of william james*. When your results list comes up, look for the "Format" options on the left side of the screen, and check the box next to "Journal, magazine" – you might need to click the "Show more ..." link to make this option appear. Doing this will limit your results to only the records for journal titles, which will be very helpful: the Everything search in WorldCat contains a lot of entries, and since most journal names are only a few words, there will be a great deal of irrelevant material that matches your search. After you've limited your search to journals, click on the title of the journal you want, and use the ZIP code lookup to find the journal at a library near you.

State libraries may also provide online access to an article that you need. Check the list at http://www.publiclibraries.com/state_library.htm for a link to your state's library. You may need to have a valid library card from a public library in your state to use these resources; in other cases, you may be able to log in with your driver's license number, or the website may simply recognize that your Internet connection is located in that state and grant access. The available resources vary from state to state, as do the designs of their websites, so it's difficult to give specific directions that will work for everyone. Here are a few things that you might look for:

- If you can find a link to "electronic journals," try to find the journal title by searching or browsing, like we did above with WorldCat. Once you get access to a specific journal, you can

search for the article title, or browse through the available issues for the one containing your article.

- If you can find a link or searchbox to “search article databases,” try searching for the author’s last name and the title of the article: using our example above, you’d search for *hall polytheism of william james*. Bear in mind that this approach is not guaranteed to get you the article – many state libraries subscribe to article-index databases that may have information about articles, but not the articles themselves. If you find a listing for the article using this search, click on the title and look for a link that says “full text” or “PDF”.
- If all else fails, look for a link to “ask for help” or “ask a librarian”: most sites will at least provide a phone number and email address, and many also have a chat widget that allows you to talk online with a librarian.

How can I find articles on my research topic?

What if, instead of a specific article, you need to search for articles on a specific topic? This will usually be the case if you’re doing a research paper for a CHS course, or working on a literature review for your thesis. The free search-engine tools available on the Web are not likely to serve you well here: good topic searching in the academic literature requires good indexing of article-level information, and the organizations who undertake this task are almost without exception commercial entities who sell access to their indexes rather than giving them away. How can you get access to these indexes? There are a few methods that you might try:

- If there is a nearby public university you can visit, this is probably your best choice. Most university libraries spend substantial portions of their budgets on electronic journals and the article-indexing databases that make them easier to search. These databases will not be available for your use on the Web unless you’re a student or staff member at that university, but you may be able to use them as a guest if you visit an on-campus library. See the “Using public university libraries” section below for more information, and make liberal use of the on-campus reference librarians for recommendations on which databases to search for your particular topic.
- As mentioned in the previous section, many state libraries purchase access to online information resources for their citizens, which may include article-index databases. Find your state library using the list of links at http://www.publiclibraries.com/state_library.htm and look for a list of available databases (it may be listed as “online resources” or “research resources” or given some other name – don’t get frustrated if it’s not immediately apparent). Once you find the list, look for resources described as “academic,” “scholarly,” or “peer-reviewed.” Specific titles that you might find are *Academic OneFile*, *ProQuest Research Library*, and *Academic Search*. You might also find some “reference” databases, such as *MasterFile* or *Gale Virtual Reference Library*; these databases might have some useful information on a topic, but they’re not article databases – they’re more closely related to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, or a more reliable Wikipedia. Once you identify a candidate database, try doing a Google search for *using*

[name of database] to find a user's guide, preferably one written by a librarian (if it's on a library website, that's usually a good sign). Pay particular attention to information on using the "subject" or "descriptor" features of the database, as these provide more precise methods of searching than a simple Google-like keyword search.

- Your local public library may have purchased access to one or more article-index databases; call, visit, or check the library's website to see what's available. You may be able to access databases from home if you have a valid library card, or you may need to use the on-site computers at the library. Available resources will vary widely from location to location: a small-town library may have little or no access to academic information, while the New York Public Library has enough resources to support pursuit of Ph.D.-level research in a number of fields. When in doubt, ask a local librarian!

Using public university libraries

In addition to your public and state library options, there may be one or more public universities nearby which can assist in your studies. Since public universities are supported in part by state taxpayer funds, their libraries are generally open to public use; this often includes access to the university's collection of electronic full-text journals and article-index databases, as well as the print collection of books and journals. You can usually identify public universities by their names, which generally contain the name of the state: University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Eastern Michigan University are all public universities, for example, while University of Detroit, Kalamazoo College, and Albion College are private institutions.

If you're planning a visit to a nearby university, gather some information in advance:

- Use the university's website to find a list of their libraries – there may be more than one on campus – and look for a main or graduate library branch, which is most likely to house the collections and expertise that you'll need for your work.
- Find out where the nearby public parking lots and/or public transit stops are located, especially if you have mobility issues – libraries are often positioned in the center of campus, which is great for students but not necessarily helpful for visitors.
- Check their hours of availability: many large universities have branches that are open 24/7, but not all, and hours can vary from library to library on the same campus. It's also possible that the reference desk at a library has more limited hours than the building itself, which may be important if you find yourself in need of assistance during your visit.
- Call or email their reference desk and confirm that they allow public or "guest" access to their electronic resources. If you're working on a research project for a class, it might be useful to ask for a referral to a subject specialist librarian, who could recommend specific databases to search. (The librarian at the reference desk may also have some useful suggestions!) You'll also need to find out what facilities are available for printing and photocopying for guest users – you

may have to purchase a “copy card” of a specific denomination (\$5, \$10, etc.) at a circulation desk or other location in the library.

What do I do if I need more help?

Ask a librarian! If you’re having difficulty with a local resource or service, such as a database at a public university or the interlibrary loan system at your public library, look for a reference desk in the library, or for a “help” or “ask a librarian” link on the website. If you’re getting repeatedly stumped in trying to find a particular item, or if you have a question that this guide has not addressed, email me at librarian@cherryhillseminary.org

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