Humanities Databases

Roger Gillis and Lindsay McNiff
Killam Library
roger.gillis@dal.ca
lindsay.mcniff@dal.ca

Research Bootcamp
May 30, 2018
Agenda

What is humanities research?

The library catalogue

Database searching (MLA, Historical Abstracts, Project Muse)

Citation chaining

Primary sources
What is humanities research?

How is knowledge gained/created in the sciences and social sciences?

How is knowledge gained/created in the humanities?
Methods (to name a few)

- Historical method
- Conceptual analysis
- Textual criticism

See more: University of South Carolina Humanities Research Guide
What does it look like?

**Sciences/Social Sciences**
- Introduction
- Literature review
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Citations

**Humanities**
- ???????????????????????????
- ???????????????????????????
- ???????????????????????????
Another difference between Humanities & the Sciences/Social Sciences...
Searching options

Library Catalog
- Good for searching books
- Searches across databases and other resources

Indexing & Abstracting databases
- More focused searching (discipline-specific)
- Includes journal articles, book reviews, some e-books, and primary source material (limited)

Specialized databases & Primary sources
- Often specific to theme, time period, contain unique, non-published materials
Library catalog

Search Library Resources

Novanet Basic Search | Books | Articles | Databases | e-Journals | Subject Guides | Archives

Novanet Basic Search

enter search terms here

Donate to the Libraries

Novanet Classic
Accessing databases
Indexing & Abstracting Databases
Subject-specific

Multidisciplinary

Academic Search Premier (Ebsco)
Research Library (ProQuest)
JSTOR
ScienceDirect
Scopus
Web of Science
Google Scholar

Images: Arrested Development Wiki and Telegraph UK
## Databases across the disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MLA International Bibliography</td>
<td>America History &amp; Life (North America)</td>
<td>Philosopher’s Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Muse</td>
<td>Historical Abstracts</td>
<td>PhilPapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Medieval Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cross-disciplinary:** JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, Digital Dissertations
Databases for document types

**Theses/Dissertations:** ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global

**Book reviews:** Book Review Digest Retrospective

**Newspaper articles:** Factiva, LexisNexis, Eureka

**Primary sources:** Black Thought & Culture, British & Irish Women’s Letters and Diaries
3 ways to access databases:

1. Searching for the database by name.
2. Through your subject guide.
3. Searching the A-Z database list by subject.
Finding your subject guide

1. Go to Library home page (http://dal.ca/library)
2. Click “Subject Guides” from top menu
3. Search or Browse for an appropriate subject guide
Try it out!

Complete Exercises 1 & 2:

1) List the Subject Guides you could use to find databases
2) Visit one or more of these Subject Guides and write down a few databases you could use to find articles.
Database searching
Plan your search

Research Topic:
Gender roles in Shakespeare’s plays.

Research Question:
How were gender roles depicted in Shakespeare’s plays?
Identify concepts

Shakespeare  Gender roles
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify keywords</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td>Gender roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td>Masculinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Femininity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify keywords

Shakespeare

William Shakespeare

Gender roles

Gender
Masculinity
Femininity

Plays

Drama (too broad)
As you like it
Twelfth Night

Hints:

- Use a thesaurus or subject headings to identify different keywords that could be used.
- Look at the abstracts or descriptions in books or articles on the topic and see what terms the author uses.
AND, OR, NOT

AND = Search both keywords/phrases

OR = Search for one keywords/phrases

Example: Shakespeare AND (Gender OR Feminism)

NOT = exclude keywords/phrases

Example: (Shakespeare AND Gender) NOT Othello
Controlled vocabularies

- Use of more formal terms that resources are filed under.

- Called different things in different databases (e.g. Thesaurus in MLA, Indexes in Historical abstracts (CLIOnotes))
Quick exercise in the MLA

You’re looking for articles on how parenthood is reflected in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.
Quick exercise in the MLA

Now you’d like to find some more articles on Mary Shelley’s relationship to parenting and her parents.
Word variation

- “*” -- use an asterisk after a word to catch different word variations
  E.g. “Shakespear*” - Shakespeare, Shakespearian

Be careful because you might include unintended words as part of this: e.g. “Germ*” vs. “German*” = Germans, Germany.”
Not getting results

Try different variations of the search terms

Try fewer search terms (sometimes less is more)
Entering your keywords

Use different fields provided

Select the field that you wish to search (e.g. Title and Abstract)

Use AND, OR, NOT options appropriately
Proximity & Wildcard operators

- "*" -- use n# to find words within close proximity to one another. E.g. “Shakespeare n2 gender” (note: different databases use different conventions for this)

Use “?” to find variations on letter. E.g. wom?n will find “women” and woman”
Limiting your search results

Limit by certain criteria:

- Type (e.g. scholarly, peer-reviewed)
- Date
- Source-type
- Language
Citation chaining

The practice of looking forward and backward in time for research that has cited or was cited by a particular article.

Example:


Paul Sherwin

Frankenstein: Creation as Catastrophe

As Frankenstein gets under way, we are lured by the promise of a new beginning: Walton's pathbreaking journey to the North Pole. Bound for Archangel to assemble a crew, Walton is inspired by the cold northern wind to envision a perpetually warm and radiant paradise at the summit of the globe. To be there would be to capture the heavens in a glance, to tap earth's central power source, and to stand within the magic circle of the poets he once sought to emulate but whose sublimity he could not match. Such extravagance is easier to credit if we keep in mind the uneasiness it is intended to dispel: "There is something at work in my soul, which I do not understand" (p. 21). Perhaps for his own good, and certainly at the dramatically right moment, the quest founders somewhere in the frozen wastes between Archangel and the Pole, just where Walton is waylaid by Frankenstein, who is feverishly pursuing the path of the Creature's departure. It frame, that its remains may afford no light . . . my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds" (pp. 222–23). To Walton, however, belongs the burden of the mystery as he watches this self-destroying artifact vanish into darkness and distance and contemplates a catastrophe at the Pole.

I

Mary Shelley might well have titled her novel One Catastrophe after Another. For Frankenstein, who is dubiously in love with his own polymorphously disastrous history, the fateful event to which every other catastrophe is prelude or postscript is the creation. According to the archaic model implicit in his narrative, transcendence is equivalent to transgression, and his presumptuous deed is invested with the aura of a primal sin against nature that somehow justifies the ensuing retributive bother. Condemned
Exercise 2

Using the worksheet, brainstorm search terms for your topic.

Visualize how your search would look in a database.

Try it out in one of the databases you found in Exercise 1.

One the reverse side, see if your article has subject headings and try citation chaining.
Specialized databases / primary sources

ABOUT EARLY CANADIANA ONLINE

This virtual library holds the most complete set of full-text historical content about Canada, including books, magazines and government documents.

Early Canadiana Online is used by scholars to advance our knowledge of Canada in a wide variety of fields, by educators to bring primary sources into the classroom, and by genealogists and history buffs to discover Canada's early days.

We take painstaking efforts to capture the full span of Canada's documentary record, adding new content every year. This includes material published from the time of the first European settlers to the first half of the 20th century.

Our content spans 21 languages, including French, English, Latin, Greek, and many First Nations languages.
Primary sources

Primary sources are records of events created as they occurred, or recorded by eyewitnesses.

They come in many formats:
- Letters & Email
- Journals, Diaries, & Memoirs
- Audio Recordings
- Photographs
- Video Recordings
- "Once upon a time..."

And Much More!

Image source: Image by Shonnmharen [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Primary_Sources.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Primary_Sources.png). Licensed under CC-BY.
Primary sources

History Libguide (under primary sources - some are grouped by countries)

English LibGuide (under primary sources)

Government Documents and Newspapers libguides

Google site searching (site:domain.ca)

Specific archives (e.g. British Library, Library & Archives Canada)
Please Note: not all archival material is digitized and online

Photo by Samuel Zeller on Unsplash
Exercise 3

Do Part 3 of “Finding the right databases” and make a list of possible tools you could use to find primary sources.
Final Humanities search tips

Always look to see if you can select a specific historical period.

If locating a book chapter in a database, try searching the actual book title in Novanet to track it down.

When you have found some relevant articles, have a look in the record for more subject terms.

Look at the sources cited in relevant articles and search for them in the database and/or catalog.
Getting help

- Using the library
- LiveHelp
- Killam reference desk
- Your liaison librarians
Thanks!

Any questions?

Roger Gillis
roger.gillis@dal.ca
494-2003

Lindsay McNiff
lindsay.mcniff@dal.ca
494-4460