Humanities Research

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

Research Bootcamp
May 27, 2019
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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sciences/Social Sciences</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citations</td>
<td>????</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
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

**English**
- MLA International Bibliography
- Project Muse
- International Medieval Bibliography

**History**
- America History & Life (North America)
- Historical Abstracts

**Philosophy**
- Philosopher’s Index
- PhilPapers

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

Theses/Dissertations: ProQuest Dissertations & Theses
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 1-3:

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.
3) Find a dissertation or thesis that is relevant to your research
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
Identify keywords

Shakespeare
William
Shakespeare

AND

Gender roles
Gender
OR
Masculinity
OR
Femininity
Identify keywords

- Shakespeare
  - William Shakespeare

- Gender roles
  - Gender
  - Masculinity
  - Femininity

- 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 and parenting/parents more generally (beyond *Frankenstein*)
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)

Look for appropriate subject headings
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?qn 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:

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 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

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 4 of “Finding the right databases” and make a list of possible tools you could use to find primary sources for your topic.
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