

2

Books

Print publications online

The Internet and the printed word are sometimes discussed as though they were two distinct kinds of information, one of them unreliable and suspect, the other dependable and trustworthy. Over the past few years the distinction between the Internet and the printed word has broken down completely and it no longer makes any sense to think of them as two opposing categories. After a decade of rapid technological and economic change, the Internet is now the main medium for distributing and accessing articles from academic journals, and it is fast becoming a principal medium for distributing and accessing books. If you're looking for print publications, the best place to start is online.

Although the distinction between what is online and what is in print is breaking down, the concept of print publication continues to be important. Online documents which are also available in print form have generally gone through a set of quality control measures which have developed in the world of print publishing, measures which the bulk of purely online documents do not have to go through. Print publications are much more likely to have gone through a peer review process, whereby people with expertise in the field assess whether they are worth publishing, through an editing process in which authors are encouraged to improve their work, and through copy-editing and proof-reading processes aimed at eliminating errors. These processes are far from flawless and are the subject of much harsh and justified criticism. Print publications can be poorly written, error laden and biased just like web pages, even when they have been through peer review. Decisions on what to publish are often bound up with academic power struggles, fads and fashions and complex personal networks. The essential point here is that you have to approach any piece of writing with a critical eye, regardless of the source.

Nonetheless, print publications online constitute a distinctive genre of document that is marked out from other online materials not subject to the same quality-control processes. They constitute the most clearly organized and quality controlled sector of the online world and they remain the single most important online resource for anyone doing research in the social sciences or the humanities. When you are writing on a research topic you are expected to address the central debates and the established body of knowledge around this topic in the academic literature. For this reason alone it is important that you start your research with the online services devoted to academic books and articles.

Order and chaos

In one sense, the world of print online is the best organized and ordered part of the Internet, with texts carefully selected, catalogued, indexed and stored in elaborate databases that allow sophisticated searches. In another sense, it is the most chaotic and confusing part of the Net. These texts have such high commercial value that competing information providers offer multiple routes to overlapping but distinctive databases of these texts. The publishers who own copyright on these publications make deals with a variety of indexing services in order to publicize and sell the materials through as many avenues as possible. Thus a single journal article may be listed in dozens of different databases. To take just one example, articles from *Social History*, a journal located at the intersection between the social sciences and the humanities, are indexed in more than 20 different databases. This is further complicated by the fact that these databases often index journals from different starting points so that one database will cover a journal from 1994 while another will have coverage dating back to 1984. In addition, each database may allow slightly different kinds of search. While there is huge overlap between the databases, it is far from complete and there is no single database you can rely on for comprehensive coverage. It's necessary to search a few if you are trying to make sure you have covered everything in a specialized area. To complicate matters further, you will find that many of the same databases are made available through several different commercial products, all bundling a different selection of databases together to market an all-in-one package.

Access costs

Most of the material in most of the services dealt with below will only be available to you if your university or library pays the subscription fees. Your institution will only subscribe to a selection of the services below. Many services will recognize that you are accessing the service from a computer at your home institution and will automatically give you access via their home page if your institution is subscribed. If this is not the case,

you need to check on your university or library's web pages for a link to these services.

Two developments are making life easier for those whose institutions are not subscribed to some of these massive and expensive services. In the first place, more and more databases are allowing anyone to conduct searches of the databases free of charge, while limiting access to full text to subscribers. As search services they are useful in their own right in identifying material. Several of these services, and a range of new services emerging to cater to the needs of individual researchers, allow you to purchase single articles, although the charges for individual academic articles remain very high. In addition some services are experimenting with other innovative pricing models which cater to the individual researcher, including the option to buy access to the full contents of a database for a set period of time, an hour or two, or a day perhaps.

Alongside this, there has recently been a significant increase in the volume of freely available academic literature and some of the services below are primarily devoted to distributing this free literature. Despite this, the bulk of high-quality academic literature is locked up in these subscription databases and your access will be very much determined by the amount of hard cash your institution is paying to ensure that you get access to these materials.

S**Search strategy: identifying key texts through reading lists**

The first step in a literature search is to identify some of the key texts in the area, the works that everyone writing on this area has to engage with because their arguments set the terms of the debate. Your professor or lecturer should be a good starting point for information on key texts.

Beyond this, you can also get access to lists of key works in the course syllabi and reading lists made available online by hundreds of thousands of other professors and lecturers. *Syllabus Finder* (chnm.gmu.edu/tools/syllabi/) allows you to do a combined search of over one million syllabi. Not every syllabus includes a reading list but most of them do. If you find that your research topic is the subject of an entire course, or forms a major component of a course at another university, the syllabus for that course can be extremely useful, not only in providing a specialized list of key works in the area, but also in the short summaries of topics which are often provided. These can give you a flavour of the key debates in the area.

If you wanted to do research on the sociology of food, for example, you might do a search in *Syllabus Finder* on *The Sociology of Food* by Mennell, Murcott and van

<p>Syllabus Finder</p> <p>Search Syllabi</p> <p>About this Tool</p> <p>Help</p> <p>Tips & FAQ</p>	<p>3. Warwick: Classics and Ancient History: Modules: Essays - 18k</p> <p>Google excerpt: Intro. to S. Mennell, A. Murcott, AH van Otterloo, <i>The Sociology of Food</i> (London, ... 1994), 199-216 also in R. Buxton ed. <i>Oxford Readings in Greek Religion</i> ...</p> <p>4. Classics: Modules: Food and Drink in the Ancient Mediterranean - 15k</p> <p>Google excerpt: Intro. to S. Mennell, A. Murcott, AH van Otterloo, <i>The Sociology of Food</i> (London, ... Would you answer the questions under week 1 differently after reading ...</p> <p>5. GCAL Logo HTLH437 MANAGING FOOD AND CULTURE General Information ... - 7k</p> <p>Google excerpt: Syllabus, Social and cultural patterns and historical issues related to food and ... Mennell, S.Murcott, A & Van Otterloo, AV(1992), <i>The Sociology of food</i>, ...</p>
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FIGURE 2.1 Extract from Syllabus Finder results for a search on **Mennell** “**Sociology of Food**”

Otterloo, a key text on the topic. A search on **Mennell** “**Sociology of Food**” brings back seven results, among them syllabi for courses on the ‘Sociology of Food and Eating’ and ‘Food & Drink in the Ancient Mediterranean’. These syllabi provide a list of topics dealt with and a short list of readings.

There is a strong emphasis on history courses in Syllabus Finder however, and American syllabi predominate. Some academic disciplines are organized very differently in different countries and non-US researchers will need to find out what subject headings their area of interest comes under in the USA if they are to locate useful American reading lists.

Books and articles

Just as the distinction between print and the Internet is breaking down, so too is the distinction between book and article and paragraph. Increasingly, publishers are bundling books together into online services which organize, describe and sell access to books by chapter and by page, presenting 20 or 30 related books as a kind of advanced encyclopedia or subject-specific database. Some publishers, such as *Taylor and Francis* (www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk), allow subscribers to create their own books by bundling together bits and pieces from the thousands of books they sell, choosing a chapter here and a paragraph there. Publishers such as *Oxford University Press* (www.oup.co.uk) now provide short abstracts describing the contents of individual chapters within books and have opened these abstracts to keyword searches by the big search engines like Google and Yahoo. In treating individual chapters as

discrete texts, these services erode the distinction between article and book chapter as both become search results within the big Internet search engines. The technology tends to strip these items out of the context in which they were produced. It is important for researchers to understand that context in order to better understand the content.

Reference sources

Reference books such as dictionaries and encyclopedias are easily broken into bite-sized pieces for consumption online because they are collections of short, discrete items, related through cross-references between entries. Large numbers of specialist encyclopedias in the social sciences, which provide concise introductions to key concepts, key debates and key academic writers, are available online. Some of the entries in these reference sources provide valuable introductions to key texts in very specific areas. They provide a good introduction to unfamiliar concepts and writers as you begin your research.

Several publishers who produce a range of closely related reference sources in the social sciences have bundled these books together into online reference collections, searchable by keyword and subject. Most academic libraries should be subscribed to at least one of the services listed below. Most of these services will allow anyone to search the titles and abstracts to get a sense of what is available, but only make the full text available if your university is subscribed to the service. There is a large overlap between some of these services.

Encyclopaedia Britannica online (**Britannica.com**) One of the best-known general encyclopedias. Some features are available free of charge.

Gale Virtual Reference Library (**www.gale.com**) A vast collection of handbooks and encyclopedias from a large number of academic publishers, including a variety of specialized social science reference works. *Xreferplus* (**www.xreferplus.com/**) is the title of one of the packages offered to libraries that want to access these sources. You can limit your search to books in your subject area.

International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences (**www.sciencedirect.com/science/referenceworks/008043076**) This massive work from Elsevier, one of the largest social science publishers, includes almost 4,000 articles and is updated yearly. Anyone can browse through abstracts describing the entries, organized alphabetically, but the full text is limited to subscribers. Your institution should provide a direct link if it is subscribed.

Oxford Reference Online (**www.oxfordreference.com/**) This includes a collection of several social science encyclopedias which can be searched jointly or individually.

Routledge Reference Resources Online (www.reference.routledge.com) This includes a collection of social science reference books.

Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) Strictly speaking Wikipedia doesn't belong here. It has no print version. It is included here because it has become such an important academic reference source. Like the reference sources dealt with above, Wikipedia organizes material by subject and aspires to comprehensive encyclopaedic coverage. Wikipedia entries can be written by anyone and altered by anyone. Although it sounds anarchic this process has seen the development of powerful, well-written and useful articles on a wide range of academic topics. It provides some invaluable introductions to key concepts, debates and thinkers in the social sciences and the humanities. Wikipedia has been rightly criticized for the fact that many readers edit entries in pursuit of their own agenda and the consequent inclusion of false material. Despite this, it has huge strengths. You would not expect to use it as a central resource for a piece of academic research, or to cite it as a reliable source, but like an encyclopedia, it generally gives you a good overview of a topic, identifies key debates and provides pointers to key sources. The disputes that rage on Wikipedia are a useful reminder that knowledge is a site of struggle and contest.

A separate service called PlaceOpedia (www.placeopedia.com) maps Wikipedia articles on to the locations they relate to, allowing you to browse Wikipedia geographically.

Wikipedia is at its best when it comes to obscure topics and current events that would never be covered by any encyclopedia, It is hard to imagine any other way in which information on these obscure topics can be gathered together in such a concise way and be so easy to locate. Despite Wikipedia's flaws, it is simply too valuable a resource to exclude. No encyclopedia can come close to the level of detail it provides and the dynamism of its content. Unlike the sources listed above, it's free.

Library catalogues

Worldcat

With over 60 million records from the combined library catalogues of more than 9,000 libraries worldwide, Worldcat is a central source of bibliographic information on academic books. It is expanding its capabilities to include reviews and reader commentary. The service has its weaknesses and omissions, and more sophisticated searching is possible in the catalogues of individual libraries, but it is massive. Dominated as it is by academic libraries, it deals with a very different set of books from those catalogued by online bookstores. There is much greater historical depth

and it is much more heavily weighted towards academic materials. You can download references from Worldcat but in many cases they have not been entered correctly and you'll need to edit them a little after importing them to a reference management package such as *EndNote*, *Procite* or *Reference Manager*. Look for a link to Worldcat from your library's web pages.

Through a program called *Open Worldcat*, Yahoo, Google, Google Scholar, Amazon.com and several other online services now search inside the Worldcat database. The 'library search' link on Google Scholar results will take you to Worldcat information on the book in question. In Yahoo, 'Find in a library' headings on search results indicate that the link will take you to the Worldcat catalogue.

You can perform further searches on Worldcat results via Google or Yahoo but you can search much more flexibly by searching Worldcat directly. Worldcat allows you to search by 'class descriptor' (the subject classification number for the book) and by subject, providing two ways to identify closely related books. If you do a subject search in Worldcat via Google or Yahoo, you get a page of results that contain less detail and flexibility than the results received when you search Worldcat directly. One of the greatest disadvantages of searching Worldcat via these other services is that you cannot select items from the results list to download to a reference management package.

Choose the 'Libraries Worldwide' link to identify libraries near you that contain the books you're interested in. This can help to identify a nearby library which has a particularly strong collection in your area of interest and which would be worth visiting, to pore over a large number of books in a short time rather than ordering them by Inter Library Loan. If you identify such a library, you can also go directly to its online catalogue and search by the relevant subject and classification number to identify further books that it might be useful to look at while you're there. It is also useful to do a subject search of the catalogues of universities which are home to a specialized research centre or institute in the area you're working on. They should house a large and specialized collection.

Other library catalogues

LibDex, *The Library Index* (www.libdex.com/) Search by keyword or browse by country to find links to the online catalogues of academic and public libraries worldwide.

The US Library of Congress (www.loc.gov) The official library serving the US legislature. The advanced search allows you to go beyond the book catalogue and to search their collections of manuscripts.

The British Library (catalogue.bl.uk) As a copyright library the British Library is entitled to receive a copy of every book published in Britain or Ireland and consequently has a much wider collection than most. It includes specialized collections.

COPAC (copac.ac.uk/copac) This allows you to do a unified search of major university research libraries in Britain and Ireland, by subject and by author or title. You can also search it for journals to see which libraries hold the journals you want.

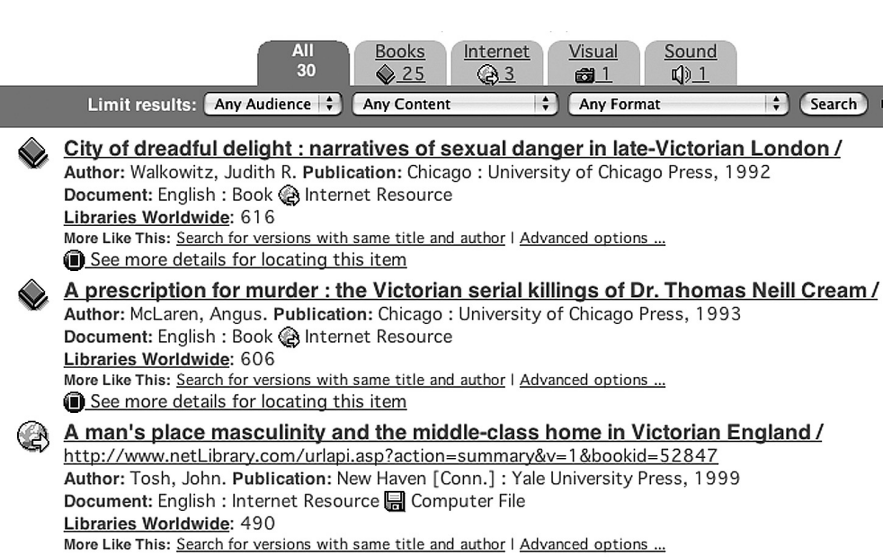
Books in Print (www.booksinprint.com) Not strictly speaking a catalogue, university librarians and bookshops use this comprehensive guide to books both in and out of print as an authoritative source of information when buying books. It differs from Worldcat in that its primary focus is on making it possible to buy books. It also allows you to search for audio and video. You can sign up to their alert service which will send you an email when new books matching your interests are added to the database. Select 'forthcoming' to search for books that haven't yet been published.


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Search strategy: searching by subject in library catalogues

At the early stages of your literature search you can use online library catalogues to identify closely related books. Search for a key text in Worldcat, one that relates to your specific area of interest rather than to the broad subject area. Then choose 'class descriptors' to return a list of books catalogued under the same classification number, belonging to precisely the same area of specialization as the key text. You can also call up a list of books that have been given the same subject descriptor or relate to the same geographic area.

To search for books on gender and sexuality in Victorian Britain, for example, begin by searching Worldcat for a much-cited text, such as *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* by Judith Walkowitz. The Worldcat entry for the book includes a list of subject categories. Of the half dozen categories into which the book has been placed, one of them clearly fits closely with the research topic of gender and sexuality in Victorian Britain: 'Sex role – England – History – 19th century'. There are 30 items catalogued under this heading, including 25 books. Among the first ten books are several titles that are clearly relevant, including:

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The screenshot shows the Worldcat search interface. At the top, there are filters for 'All 30', 'Books 25', 'Internet 3', 'Visual 1', and 'Sound 1'. Below these are dropdown menus for 'Limit results: Any Audience', 'Any Content', and 'Any Format', along with a 'Search' button. The search results are listed below, each with a diamond icon and a book icon. The first result is 'City of dreadful delight : narratives of sexual danger in late-Victorian London / Author: Walkowitz, Judith R. Publication: Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1992'. The second result is 'A prescription for murder : the Victorian serial killings of Dr. Thomas Neill Cream / Author: McLaren, Angus. Publication: Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1993'. The third result is 'A man's place masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England / http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=52847 Author: Tosh, John. Publication: New Haven [Conn.] : Yale University Press, 1999'.

FIGURE 2.2 Worldcat results for subject category 'Sex role – England – History – 19th century'

- Limited livelihoods: gender and class in nineteenth-century England
- Banishing the beast: sexuality and the early feminists
- A man's place: masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England
- Gender in English society, 1650–1850: the emergence of separate spheres?

You can use the same strategy to search for books by subject in your own library catalogue.

You can also access Worldcat via Google Scholar and Yahoo. Search Google Scholar for the book (using the author surname and the first part of the title). Then click on the 'library search' link for the book. This brings you directly to the Worldcat entry for the book, including the list of subject categories. When you click on 'Sex role – History – 19th century. – England' you should get a list of all the other books in Worldcat classified under this heading. But in a search repeated three times over the course of a week in 2006, it produced nothing, highlighting a problem with Google Scholar's search of Worldcat.

Yahoo describes any results it returns from Worldcat as a 'Find in a library' result and you can include that phrase as a search term to limit Yahoo results to items from Worldcat. In the example used here, search Yahoo for '**city of dreadful delight** **find in a library**'. The link for the book brings you to the Worldcat entry you have already seen via Google, but when you click on the subject heading 'Sex role – History – 19th century. – England' Yahoo brings back 55 results. It brings back more results than Worldcat because it doesn't exclude duplicates. Among the first ten results are three of the four relevant books turned up in the top ten results obtained by searching Worldcat directly and one additional useful book. While you can download the Worldcat results to a reference manager if you search Worldcat directly, you can't do this through Yahoo.

Online bookshops

Online bookshops provide powerful bibliographic searching tools as an inadvertent by-product of their efforts to sell books. Unlike library catalogues, they don't allow you to download references easily and often make it difficult to find the citation information you need. They provide an important supplement to the library catalogues in making short descriptions of books available, often including a listing of contents, and allowing us to search for books in novel ways. The online bookshops discussed below also provide significant added information on books.

Amazon.com/Amazon.co.uk Amazon has become an increasingly powerful and important source of bibliographic information over the past few years and provides several unique ways of locating books by subject. Through arrangements with a variety of other booksellers, including second-hand booksellers, it provides one of the largest bibliographic databases in existence.

'Customers who bought this item also bought' provides a unique insight into the books which other people interested in your subject area are currently buying, potentially flagging up recent publications which you weren't aware of. The option to 'Search for books by subject' presents a list of all the subject categories a book fits into. You can select some or all of these categories to get a list of very closely related books.

When you search Amazon by subject you will often be presented with a 'Listmania' column on the side, providing links to short lists of books compiled by people interested in the subject area. A large proportion of these are compiled by students. They often provide a commentary on the books, and can sometimes provide a useful guide to some of the current literature. When you select a list you will also get links to other Listmania lists on related subjects.

Amazon.com (but not Amazon.co.uk) presents you with lists of 'capitalized phrases' (CAPs) and 'statistically improbable phrases' (SIPs) which appear in the book. The SIPs are rare phrases, and many of them are likely to be uniquely associated with the subject you're interested in. They can be a useful source of very specific keywords for use in future searches. They are only provided for books with the 'Search inside the book' facility. 'Books on related topics' is a relatively new feature in Amazon.com, and is available only for books with the 'Search inside the book' feature. This will return a list of books which share SIPs with the book you're looking at.

While reader reviews on Amazon are quite uneven in quality, reviews of academic books are often quite useful because people who have gone to the trouble of accessing the academic literature on the topic generally have more than a casual interest in the topic. In addition, Amazon often links to reviews in print publications.

Amazon.com includes citation searching features, providing links to books cited in the book you're looking at and 'Books that cite this book'.

These features appear to be limited to citations in books on the Amazon database that have the 'Search inside the book' feature and therefore miss out on many citations.

The Amazon bookstores serving separate national markets have quite different collections of books and it is well worth searching both Amazon UK and Amazon in the USA for English-language books. Amazon's 'search inside the book' feature allows you to search the full text of selected books and is dealt with below along with other services providing access to the full text of books online.

Blackwell's (www.blackwell.co.uk/bookshop.blackwell.com) Includes reader reviews and ratings and a 'People who bought this also bought' heading. It provides library classification numbers.

Barnes and Noble (www.bn.com) This site provides short extracts from press reviews of books and allows you to search for 'more on this subject' by ticking the relevant subject classifications. They include a 'People who bought this book also bought' section.

Full-text books online

Printed books originate as computer files these days and it is a relatively simple matter to make them available online, where they can be searched much more quickly and flexibly than the printed version, and searched as part of a wider collection of books. In the past few years there has been a dramatic expansion in the availability of full-text books online, in a variety of different forms. While many of these texts, such as the reference books mentioned above, are bundled together into collections open to paying subscribers, many other texts are freely available online to varying degrees.

Amazon's 'Search inside the book' (amazon.com/amazon.co.uk)

Amazon has made arrangements with a large number of individual publishers to make the full text of their books searchable on Amazon. You can't view or print entire books, but you can view extracts surrounding your search terms, a feature with the potential to revolutionize the way in which we use books. You can also view a book's contents pages and index. The arrangements made with individual publishers determine the level of access you can get to the text around your search terms, but in many cases you can read the text of the full page your search term appears in, if you have registered (for free) as an Amazon user. Where the full text is not searchable, Amazon sometimes offers a 'Look inside the book' feature, which allows you to view the index and contents pages. In some cases

Amazon.co.uk provides full-text searching of a book not available for full text searching in Amazon.com and vice versa, emphasizing once again that it's often worth doing a search on both. While coverage is uneven and far from comprehensive, it includes many of the largest and most important academic publishers, providing access to vast numbers of high-quality, recent academic books.

By allowing us to simultaneously search the full text of hundreds of thousands of books it provides a way for us to identify books which make reference to very specific issues we are interested in. It will turn up works that you would probably never find by any other route because the book as a whole does not relate to your subject area even though it may have a useful page or two directly relevant to your research topic. It is most appropriate for 'needle in the haystack' searches at the later stages of your research rather than for general subject searches. In searching the full text of bibliographies in books it also provides a new kind of citation search. Searching for the full title of a book in Amazon, and the author surname if necessary, will yield a list of references and citations in other books, providing another way to identify texts which refer to the key works you are interested in. In Amazon.co.uk, limit your search to 'books' only, to ensure you get 'Search inside the book' results. Amazon.co.uk separates general search results from 'Search inside the book' results while Amazon.com doesn't. In some cases the exact same search in Amazon.co.uk and Amazon.com will bring up different results from a book stocked by both.

It can also be useful to carry out searches of individual books. With a copy of the book beside you, the 'Search inside the book' feature can supplement the index and contents page in the printed versions. Print indexes can sometimes be quite weak and the online search can be a valuable supplement when searching for an elusive reference in an individual book.

Unfortunately you can't yet build a collection of books which you could search jointly. If you built up a list of say 200 books relevant to a PhD research topic, it would be extremely useful to be able to limit a search to the full text of that personalized collection.

Google Book Search (books.google.com)

This service is similar in many ways to Amazon's 'Search inside the book' but has some added dimensions. Like Amazon, Google makes arrangements with individual publishers to make the full text of books searchable online. Search results in Google Book Search provide links to the books. You can view a book's table of contents and index. If a book is out of copyright, you can view the full text. In the case of most books, you can view only a few sentences around your search term, or a limited number of pages, depending on the arrangements made with individual publishers.

You have to register (for free) to view full pages. Registration allows Google to limit individuals to a small number of page views for any given book. The advanced search allows you to search by author and title and to limit your search by date. Because the content is dependent on deals with individual publishers, it is not remotely comprehensive. In addition to this, you can't easily download or copy citation details.

More revolutionary than the Google Book Search is the Google library program, which sought to bypass the publishers. Google made arrangements to scan the full text of the entire collections of three major academic libraries that between them hold a huge proportion of all the academic books ever published. Google argued that since they weren't providing users with access to the full text of these books, but only with the facility to search the full text, they weren't infringing copyright laws. In 2005 a coalition of authors and publishers brought Google to court claiming breach of copyright, bringing this Google project to a halt (BBC News, 2005; Wyatt, 2005). In the meantime Google is focusing energy on scanning books which are out of copyright. This much more modest project follows in the footsteps of one of the earliest online book projects, Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org), which does more or less the same thing and currently has a collection of over 17,000 books.

Google Scholar (scholar.google.com) provides a significantly different way of searching the Google book collection. It provides information about the books which is unavailable through the Google Book Search. A result in Google Scholar labelled 'Book' (where the title is not a hyperlink) provides full citation details for the book and provides a 'Library search' link which will connect you to a Worldcat entry for the book and allow you to see if the book is held by a library near you. A result labelled 'Book' (where the title *is* a hyperlink) links you to the full text of the book in Google Book Search.

The 'cited by' link will bring up a list of sources in which the book is mentioned, including books, academic articles and a large number of pages from the open Web. The 'Web Search' link simply does a search of the open Web using author surname and part or all of the title. It brings back huge numbers of pages from booksellers who list the book for sale and is of limited use.

The link to 'Web search for reviews', which is available for some books in Google Book Search, searches the Web for the title of the book, the word 'review' and the ISBN. You can do this yourself on any search engine to search for reviews, but because Amazon reviews are mentioned on so many web pages this is of limited use and turns up masses of duplicate results.

The Amazon and Google full-text collections overlap but both services include the full text of huge numbers of books not available from the other.

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Search strategy: using a key text to identify related works

A good book on your topic can be the ideal starting point for identifying other high-quality work directly relevant to your research. It is certainly a much faster and efficient way to find related work than doing keyword searches on massive databases.

First of all you need to identify a book that is central enough to your topic that many people writing on the topic feel they need to reference it. At the same time it needs to be specific enough that it is not cited by people from a wide range of disciplines.

For research on magic, demons and witchcraft in medieval Europe, for example, a good starting point might be a book such as *Europe's Inner Demons*, by Norman Cohn. While not everyone agrees with the conclusions of the author, it is a key text on the topic and a large proportion of people writing on this area are likely to reference it. At the same time your search will exclude the masses of popular literature on the topic which don't make reference to academic work like this.

This search does not need to be a marathon affair. Ten minutes should be all it takes to quickly search a service. There is no need to check out every vaguely promising looking item. If nothing looks useful at first glance simply move quickly on to another service. The basic principle is to do large numbers of quick searches using the same specific search term. No need to linger. In the example below, Amazon.com is used but the same general approach can be usefully applied to Amazon.co.uk, Google Scholar, Google Book Search and Worldcat.

After you have used a few services you are likely to find that your searches are yielding diminishing returns and I don't suggest you exhaustively mine all of these.

On the Amazon.com page for *Europe's Inner Demons*, the section on 'Customers who bought this book also bought' (seen in the image below) turns up two other books by the author which are not particularly relevant but it also turns up three others which appear to be directly relevant. Following the link to one of them, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages*, we see that this is an edited collection, including work by a large number of authors. The fact that it comes from a university press provides another indication that it is an academic book, while a reader review mentions that it is part of a series of academic books, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, that brings together historical scholarship on 'witchcraft'.

The link to the 'table of contents' for this book allows you to confirm its academic character and lists the chapters, giving you a better idea of whether some or all of them are directly relevant to your research. You can 'Search inside the book' (and browse the index of the book) to see if it contains information on very specific topics of interest to you.

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Customers who bought this item also bought

[The Pursuit of the Millennium : Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages \(Galaxy Books\) by Norman Cohn](#)

[Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come, 2nd Edition by Norman Cohn](#)

[The Night Battles : Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century by Carlo Ginzburg](#)

[Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History \(Middle Ages Series\) by Alan Charles Kors](#)

[The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe \(2nd Edition\) by Brian Levack](#)

Explore similar items: in [Books](#)

Figure 2.3 Books bought by Amazon.com customers who bought Europe's Inner Demons

The section for 'Customers who bought this book also bought' on this page points in turn to several more academic books which appear to be directly relevant to the topic and which can also be explored through Amazon.com.

There is a link here to a Listmania list on 'historical witchcraft' which brings together about 20 books, the bulk of which are academic. This Listmania list in turn links to other Listmania lists with overlapping lists of academic books on witchcraft. You begin to see that four or five of the books are mentioned again and again, providing a crude indication that they are regarded as key texts.

There is little need to use the more sophisticated searching options available here because the 'Customers' list has provided more than enough to start with. If it hadn't turned up anything, your next step would be to explore some of the other options on the page for *Europe's Inner Demons*, including 'Search for books by subject', 'Books on related topics' and 'Books that cite this book'.

The sponsored links on these pages are of no use, pointing as they do to a world of magic and witchcraft merchandising which bears little relation to academic study of the topic. This is also the case with some of the Listmania lists here, which are dominated by popular books with little or no connection to the academic debates. They provide a hint of the vast store of popular materials on the subject that you have almost completely excluded from your search results simply by using a key academic text as the starting point for your search.

The result of this quick search is a list of eight to ten key academic books in the area which are directly related to your topic and whose contents you can explore if the 'Search inside the book' facility is available for those particular books. If it isn't, you can check books.google.com to see if they make the full text searchable. These books can in turn be used to lead you to other books and to articles. When you come to search the databases of journals, which is dealt with in Chapter 3, you can search for articles which cite any of perhaps three or four of these key texts. You can also use them as search terms when you are looking for material on the open Web.

(Continued)

In the process of doing this search you will also have become familiar with some of the core terms which are used by all of these authors, but which relate uniquely to this subject area. These can also be a useful source of search terms when you continue on to do keyword searches of the full text of articles and the open Web.

E-books

Amazon and Google allow you to search the full text of books but they don't generally provide access to the full text. E-books are online versions of books, sold by publishers. Their main advantage is that they can be purchased and used and searched much more flexibly than printed books. Publishers are increasingly bundling related books into collections and selling access to the package as a whole. Users aren't expected to read cover to cover, but to download or print a chapter here and a page there. E-books also provide novel ways to annotate and read books. You can mark important passages and add your comments. When the time comes to write your own work you can easily locate the relevant quotes.

Net Library (www.netlibrary.com) Providing the full text of over 3,400 publicly accessible books, Net Library also allows you to search for e-books held by your library, if your library uses this service.

Ebrary (www.ebrary.com) A subscription service providing access to the full text of over 60,000 books from over 200 publishers, The Ebrary software allows you to highlight, annotate and bookmark text. It allows you to copy and paste quotes into Word documents, automatically generating a citation. It also allows you to search other online databases of books.

Taylor and Francis (www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk) They provide several thousand of their printed books as e-books and provide a variety of ways to search and buy content from these books. Unlike many of the big online services, this service is aimed at individual users as well as institutions and is extremely flexible. The ePrint and eCopy options allow you to print and copy content for as little as a few pence or cents per page in some cases. eSubscribe allows you to buy access to material for as short a timespan as 24 hours. eCompile allows you to select content from a wide range of books, putting together a page here and a chapter there to create your own customized eBook. You can then annotate and bookmark items within the customized eBook. It's all very innovative and interesting, and has the potential to change the way we think of books as a research resource, from

something you read to part of a collection you search. But all of these facilities are strictly limited in value because of the fact that they are limited to the output of one, albeit large, publisher.

When the various E-book services are finally standardized and integrated with reference management packages such as EndNote, Procite and Reference Manager (see Chapter 3) it will become a far more attractive proposition to make intensive use of E-books.

Oxford Scholarship Online (www.oxfordscholarship.com) This service includes several hundred books in the social sciences published by Oxford University Press and new titles are added regularly. All users can search and view book and chapter abstracts freely and these abstracts are now also searchable via Ingenta and Proquest, databases that used to be limited to academic articles. Since Ingenta is also searched by Google Scholar, you also search the Oxford Scholarship collection when you search in Google Scholar. This emphasizes the rapid multiplication of routes to any given document and the breakdown in the distinction between book chapters and journal articles. Subscribers can view the full text of the books.

Book reviews

Book reviews in journals, papers and magazines are now much more accessible and easy to search online. In addition to this, reader reviews posted to online bookshops and catalogues provide a valuable new resource, even if the quality of reviews is uneven. Some academic websites have used the Internet to distribute new kinds of book review. These are longer than normal because they don't suffer from restrictions on space, and often allow a right of reply to the reviewed author. These developments are radically altering the nature of book reviewing, by increasing the levels of debate and dialogue taking place around books.

Amazon.com/Amazon.co.uk customer reviews. The selection of reviews on these two services overlaps, but not completely.

Books in Print (www.booksinprint.com) This includes over half a million book reviews.

Book Review Index (www.gale.com/BRIOnline) This is a database of reviews of approximately 2 million items from around 500 journals, newspapers and magazines going back as far as 1969.

H-Review (www.h-net.org/reviews) This is entirely devoted to distributing reviews of academic books in the humanities and the social sciences, and is freely accessible to all. The selection is quite limited but the quality is generally high.

Publishers

Publishers like to develop concentrated expertise in specific areas. When your research is at an advanced stage you will probably be able to identify a few publishers who specialize in your areas of interest. At this stage it can be useful to sign up to their alerting services. You can generally select the subject areas you are interested in and receive regular email alerts when new books in those areas are published. Below are a few examples of publisher alerting services:

- *Blackwell E-mail Alerts* (www.blackwellpublishing.com/ealerts)
- *Cambridge Alerts* (www2.cambridge.org/alerts)
- *Sage Product Alerts* (www.sagepub.com)
- *Taylor and Francis eUpdates* (including Routledge) (www.tandf.co.uk/eupdates)
- *University of California Press Enews* (www.ucpress.edu/books)
- *The University of Chicago Press New Releases Notification* (www.press.uchicago.edu/mailnotifier)

Exercises

Exercise 1: Finding information about a book

Choose a key book related to your research topic and search for the book in at least three of the following services:

- Worldcat
- Amazon.com
- Amazon.co.uk
- Your library catalogue
- Google Book Search
- Google Scholar
- Books in Print

List the information about the book provided by each of these services (including reviews, facilities to access information on related books, and access to some or all of the book's content). You don't need to list all the citation details, just note whether they provide full citation details or whether certain citation elements are missing.

Which of these services allows you to download references?

Briefly outline the differences in the type of information provided on the book by the different services.

(Continued)

What was the most useful feature of each service?

Do any of these services provide useful information about the book that is not available in any of the other services?

Were any of the reader reviews useful? In what way?

Briefly describe the strengths and weaknesses of each service in providing information on your selected text.

Exercise 2: Finding a reading list

Search *Syllabus Finder* (chnm.gmu.edu/tools/syllabi/) to identify at least **three** course syllabi that provide reading lists and/or topic summaries that are directly relevant to your research topic. Note that many syllabi do not include reading lists. Search using the title and author of one or two key books in your area and one or two terms unique to your topic.

- List the titles of the relevant courses.
- Write a paragraph describing how you found the relevant syllabi, noting in particular any difficulties in locating them.
- Did you find that your topic was classified or described differently at different universities? Briefly describe any notable differences.

Exercise 3: Using a key text to identify related works

Choose a key book related to your research topic. In each of the services listed below, search for the book and then use all of the features that allow you to find related books to identify at least **three** books directly relevant to your research.

- Amazon.com
- Amazon.co.uk
- Worldcat
- Your library catalogue
- Google Book Search
- Google Scholar

List the three books identified through each service.

Write a short comparison of the three services' usefulness for identifying related books.

Exercise 4: Finding books which cite a book.

Identify a key book in your research area. Use the following services to identify other books that make reference to it.

- Amazon.co.uk
- Amazon.com
- Scholar.google.com
- Books.google.com

List the books you have identified through each service.

How much overlap is there between the results returned by the different services?

Is there any difference in the results returned by Amazon.com and Amazon.co.uk?

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each service.

Exercise 5: Finding book reviews

Identify a key book in your research area. Gather all of the reviews of the book that you can find online, using all of the following services. If your library is not subscribed to the two subscription services, just leave them out.

- Amazon.com
- Amazon.co.uk
- Books in Print (www.booksinprint.com)
- Book Review Index (www.gale.com/BRIOnline)
- H-Review (www.h-net.org/reviews)

List the reviews, including the details of the publications they appeared in (if they were published).

Compare the relative usefulness of the various services in identifying useful reviews.

Do some reviews appear in more than one source?