Moving from a research question to a literature review in the Social Sciences

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Plan for today

- **Part 1**: The literature review process
- **Part 2**: Searching
- **Part 3**: Search tools
- **Part 4**: Citations
- **Part 5**: Alerts
By the end of the session, you should:

- Understand the literature review process;
- Be able to plan an effective and structured search for your dissertation or thesis;
- Know where to look for different types of information;
- Have evaluated different methods of searching;
- Have developed search skills that can be applied across different resources;
- Know where to come for future help.

Learning outcomes
Part 1: The literature review process
Developing your literature search

1. Preliminary searching and browsing
   – Scan abstracts and skim-read papers
   – Identify current directions of research
   – How will you contribute new knowledge?

2. Structured searching with appropriate syntax
   – Identify the key articles and heavily-cited papers
   – Establish key authors, organizations and sources
   – Commit to in-depth consideration and re-reading of papers

3. Develop search
   – Track citations to follow research connections
   – “Cast net more widely” in terms of resources searched
   – Set up alerts for new content

• Stay focused on the research question and keep a search log
Part 2: Searching

Relevant scholarly research
Start with a clear research question
e.g.

What is being done to help prevent AIDS in Zimbabwe?
Search method 1: Natural language searching
Search method 1:
Google Scholar Library Links
Search method 2: Keyword searching
Search question: Main concepts

What is being done to help prevent AIDS in Zimbabwe?
### Research Question: What is being done to help prevent AIDS in Zimbabwe?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row 1</th>
<th>Concept 1: Help prevent</th>
<th>Concept 2: AIDS</th>
<th>Concept 3: Zimbabwe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Row 2</td>
<td>Prevent(ion)</td>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Acquired Immune</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educat(ion)</td>
<td>Deficiency Syndrome</td>
<td>Human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise: Search preparation

1. Write a short sentence about your research interest
2. Underline key concepts
3. Write down alternative words/phrases for each concept
4. Discuss with your neighbour.
Search syntax: Boolean logic

**AND**
- AIDS and Zimbabwe

**OR**
- HIV or AIDS

**NOT**
- prevention not treatment

NARROWS SEARCH

BROADENS SEARCH

NARROWS SEARCH
Further search syntax

Truncation and wildcards
  e.g. feminis*, wom?n

Search for a phrase by using quote marks
  e.g. “graduate students”

Parentheses
  e.g. (academic OR educational) AND achievement

Limit to particular fields
  e.g. title, abstract, keywords

Apply search filters
  e.g. date, format
Example: Combine 3 searches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question: What is being done to help prevent AIDS in Zimbabwe?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Row 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Row 2</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Row 3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) includes over 3 million bibliographic references to journal articles and to books, reviews and selected chapters dating back to 1951. It is unique in its broad coverage of international material and incorporates over 100 languages and countries. It provides cross-disciplinary coverage across the social sciences, focused on four primary subject areas: anthropology, economics, political science and sociology.

Coverage: 1951 - current

Subject coverage

- Anthropology
- Archaeology
- Cultural studies
- Demography

Also part of

International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) can also be searched as part of:
- Social Science Premium Collection
Exercise: Building a structured search

1. Create a structured search from your keywords
2. Apply the search to one of the following:
   IBSS - http://search.proquest.com/ibss
   Or a key database in your field
3. Explore the database search functionality
4. Refine your search
Search Method 3:  
Database subject headings

• Use database subject headings to identify new and useful search terms

• Terms are assigned by the database editors from a set of controlled vocabulary (thesaurus)

• **Broader terms** – brings together synonyms and related terms under one heading

• **Narrower terms** – helps refine your search
Search method 4: Scholarly search engines

SOLO Articles / Search Everything
- Scholarly search engine
- Cross-disciplinary resource
- Some subjects are covered better than others
- Lacks specialist search options

Other ProQuest databases:
- Dissertations & theses
What if it’s not available in Oxford?

• Try to obtain it on Interlibrary Loan
  – PDF/scanned copy of article or book chapter
  – Borrow the whole book from another library in the UK or internationally
  – Place a request at https://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/interlib
  – Cost is usually £5.00

• Recommend that one of the Bodleian Libraries buy a copy / subscription
  – https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/subjects-and-libraries/recommendations

• Google to see if an Open Access version is available

• Buy the individual article from the publisher (last resort)
Part 3: Search tools

- Abstracting and indexing services
- Full-text databases
- Internet search engines

Abstracting and indexing services

Full-text databases

Internet search engines
Access online resources provided by the Bodleian Libraries

- SOLO
  solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk
- Databases A-Z:
  libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/az.php
- LibGuides
  libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/oxford
Recording your methodology

“We searched six databases (Medline, Embase, PsychINFO, CINAHL, IBSS and SSCI) systematically, along with a manual search, including key journals and subject experts. Peer-reviewed studies were included if they qualitatively explored experiences of or socio-structural contexts for injection drug use initiation. A thematic synthesis approach was used to identify descriptive and analytical themes throughout studies.”

Exercise: Select databases

1. Ask yourself two questions:
   - Which subjects are pertinent to my topic? (sociology, health, public policy, education..)
   - Which formats might contain relevant research? (journal articles, working papers, books, datasets)

2. Explore the subject menu on Databases A-Z libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/az.php

3. Explore the LibGuides for recommended resources ox.libguides.com
Part 4: Citations

Researcher 3 Cites researcher 2 Cites researcher 1

Impact
Use citations to:

• Locate current research based on earlier research
• Find out how many times, and where, a publication is being cited
• Identify who is referencing a particular paper
• Explore how a particular research topic is being used to support other research
• Analyse the impact of a publication on other research in the field
• Track the history of a research idea
• Keep track of your own research
Where can you get citation information?

- **Web of Science**
  - Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)
  - Over 3,200 titles
  - Citations from 1900-present

- **Scopus**
  - Social Sciences & Humanities subject collection
  - Over 22,000 titles; 1.4 billion citations
  - Cited references going back to 1970

- **Google Scholar**
  - “While we try to be comprehensive, it isn't possible to guarantee uninterrupted coverage of any particular source”
Identify current research based on earlier research

- Web of Science citation counts
Exercise: Citation searching

1. Use your structured search in Web of Science Social Science Citation Index (SSCI)
2. Sort your results by Relevance – note some titles which have been highly cited.
3. Sort your results by Times Cited – note some titles which look relevant.
Part 5: Alerts

- New articles matching search terms
- Tables of contents from selected journals
- New citations referencing ‘parent article’

RSS / email
Search Alerts

- Create and save complex searches
- Receive alerts when new publications match your search
  - Newly published material
  - Material newly newly added to the database
- Saves you having to re-visit databases and running your searches again manually

- Can receive alerts via:
  - Email
  - RSS
Citation Alerts
Web of Science and Scopus

- Create an alert for specific articles
- Receive alerts when new publications cites your chosen articles
  - Newly published material
  - Material newly added to the database
- Saves you having to re-visit databases and running your searches again manually

- Can receive alerts via:
  - Email
  - RSS
Journal Table of Contents Alerts

JournalTocs: [www.journaltocs.ac.uk](http://www.journaltocs.ac.uk)

- Subscribe to journal titles relevant to you
- Receive alerts with a table of contents when a new issue is published
- Saves you having to check when new issues of relevant journal titles are released

- Can receive alerts via:
  - Email
  - RSS
Have a go at home:

**Exercise:** Setting up a search alert
[p. 9 of workbook]

**Exercise:** Keeping up to date with journals
[p. 10 of workbook]
Thank you for your attention.

- This presentation will be available at
  [http://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/workshops/handouts](http://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/workshops/handouts)

- Subject Consultants page:
  [https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/subjects-and-libraries/subjects/librarians](https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/subjects-and-libraries/subjects/librarians)