

Journals database training

What are journals?

Journals offer the latest ideas in a subject area. They are basically scholarly magazines, appearing several times a year with each journal focusing on a particular topic – for example, *Journal of New Testament Studies* focuses, obviously, on the New Testament. The most reliable journals are ‘peer-reviewed’ – that is to say, each article is sent to other experts in the field for comments and corrections before it is published.

‘Print journals’ are the physical copies of a journal. We have subscriptions to over eighty print journals at Vose. The latest issues are on display near reference; the back issues are placed upstairs.

‘Electronic journals databases’ are an index to print journals as well as providing full text for some of the articles. Full text means you can view the article on the computer.

Why use journals?

1. **Journal articles provide more up to date information on a subject.** Before scholars publish a book, they usually test out their ideas in journals. Thus journals are publishing ideas before they’ve appeared in a book. The last major book on a subject might have appeared ten years ago; journals give you a chance to fill in the gap of recent research.
2. **Journal articles are often more specific on a subject.** You might be researching quite a specific topic for your essay; even if there’s no book published on the topic, there’s probably a journal article.
3. **Journals are where subjects are debated.** You’ll find scholars responding to each other’s ideas directly in a journal. It will give you a good idea of how a debate is unfolding.
4. **Journals contain book reviews.** If you’re grappling with a particular book and its ideas, reviews can be very helpful.

What are the databases?

We subscribe to two databases through EBSCO:

1. *ATLA Religion Database – an index to articles with some full text*

ATLA Religion Database provides information on topics such as biblical studies, world religions, church history, and religion in social issues. ATLA Religion Database contains more than 1.6 million bibliographic records covering the research literature of religion in over 60 languages. It

includes more than 537,000 article citations from more than 1,633 journals (518 currently indexed), more than 225,000 essay citations from over 18,700 multi-author works, more than 494,000 book review citations. Coverage spans from 1949 to the present. This database is produced by the American Theological Library Association.

2. *Religion and Philosophy Collection* – another index, this one with many available full text Religion & Philosophy Collection provides extensive coverage of such topics as world religions, major denominations, biblical studies, religious history, epistemology, political philosophy, philosophy of language, moral philosophy and the history of philosophy. Religion & Philosophy Collection offers nearly 300 full text journals, including more than 250 peer-reviewed titles.

Logging on

To login to the databases in the library or at home (internet connection required) follow these steps:

1. Contact the library for your user ID and password
2. On the Vose website (www.vose.wa.edu.au), choose the library tab and then click on 'Electronic Databases'
3. A 'Login Required' window will open. Enter your user ID and password and click on the login button.
4. The 'Choose Databases' window will open; select 'ATLA Religion Database' and the 'Religion and Philosophy Collection'.

Searching

Basic search

1. The search defaults to an advanced search; it is probably better to start with basic searching. Just click on the 'basic search' tab underneath the search box.
2. Enter your search term in the Find field.
3. Click on the results which seem most relevant to get the full abstract. (An abstract is a summary.) If the abstract has full text, you can view the whole article on the computer. If it doesn't, you need to take a note of the journal title, date and page numbers. You then need to check if we have that title and issue in our library, by searching the library catalogue.
4. The default is for results to be sorted by date. It might be better to sort them by relevance. You can do this by choosing the option from the 'Sort by' function.

5. If you have too few results, try fewer terms or broader terms. Eg: instead of 'archaeology evidence Canaanite religion', try 'Canaanite archaeology'.
6. If you have too many results, try narrowing the search with one of the subject headings on the left or limiting your search on the right to recent years or scholarly publications. You may also need to try more search terms.

Advanced Search

An advanced search lets you search particular fields (title, author etc). For example, if you want to see everything N.T. Wright has written, you could search for N.T. Wright and select 'AU Author' for the field. This will limit your results to articles by him, instead of including articles about him as well.

Another helpful search tool is the truncated search – 'Aust*' will search for everything starting with 'Aust', including 'Australia', 'Australian', 'Austria'.

Search options

For both basic searches and advanced searches you can choose search options. These will help you get more precise results.

1. If you don't get many results, you might want to choose 'Also search within the full text of the articles'.
2. It might be worth restricting your results to 'Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals'. For example, you may get a lot of results from magazines like *Christianity Today* and *Christian Century*, which although possibly relevant are popular magazines rather than academic journals.
3. For much research, you will be more interested in articles than reviews. You may wish to restrict your results to 'articles'. Some results will be 'essays'. This refers you to an essay in a book which Vose may or may not have. This valuable, as many multi-author books have essays on a range of topics that you won't find from a search of the library catalogue.
4. If you are searching at home and aren't coming in to the library before the assignment is due (a very bad idea), then selecting 'full text' only will mean that you will only get results you can read at home.

Emailing and saving results

Rather than going to physically locate each article as you find its abstract, it is probably more efficient to save all the abstracts you want and then locate the articles all at once. You can do this by saving abstracts to your folder. The symbol looks like a yellow folder and is in the right hand corner of the screen.

Once you have all the abstracts you want in your folder, you can choose to save them or email them.

Abstracts are only saved to the folder for your current search period. However, you can set up your own account to save searches permanently. If you ask us, we will show you how to do this.

Exercises

1. You want to find book reviews of the following book:
Frost, Michael and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody : Hendrickson, 2003).
 - a. Do a keyword search for the 'The Shaping of Things to Come', limiting your results to book reviews. (You should get 4.)
 - b. None of the results are full text. How many of the journals does Vose have in print format? (Check the title in the library catalogue, making sure our holdings covers the date specified.)
 - c. See if you can locate the reviews in the print journals you found. (Yes, you'll have to get up from you computer and walk upstairs!)

2. You are doing an assignment on the authorship of 1 Peter.
 - a. Do a keyword search for '1 Peter authorship'. (You should get 32 results)
 - b. Next, try sorting by 'relevance'. (Your top result should be "Verba Christi in 1 Peter"
 - c. You have too many German results; limit the results to English. (You can only do this for the ATLA database, not RPC) (You should get 26 results)
 - d. Next, try limiting the results to publications after 2000. (You should now have 13 results)
 - e. Now clear all your limits and go back to what you originally had. Add the following citations to your folder:
 - i. Pseudepigraphy and the Petrine school: spirit and tradition in 1 and 2 Peter and Jude
 - ii. Silvanus was not Peter's secretary: theological bias in interpreting dia Silouapsou ... egrapsa in 1 Peter 5:12
 - f. Add to your folder the PDF of "The product of a Petrine circle? a reassessment of the origin and character of 1 Peter"
 - g. Now try emailing your folder to yourself.