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information skills for life

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY LIBRARY: FINDING JOURNAL ARTICLES USING DATABASES

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Summary

After completing this learning tool, you should be able to:

- Define a library database and explain its main use
- Select appropriate database(s) for a topic
- Select and effectively search the catalogue to find full text journal articles from a given citation

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WHY CAN'T I FIND JOURNAL ARTICLES IN THE LIBRARY CATALOGUE?

The library catalogue lists the things the library has – like books, journals, DVDs – and tells you where you will find them. You won't find journal articles on the catalogue – the library catalogue tell you what journal the library has – but it doesn't list all the articles inside the journal. Just like it will tell you what books the library has – but it doesn't list all the chapters inside. To find journal articles, you will need to search a library database.

WHAT IS A LIBRARY DATABASE?

The library has many different databases. Some databases focus on a subject, like engineering, or health. Some have research from particular countries. Some have historic information – and some just have current research. Most databases show you journal articles – but some show other types of publications – like newspaper articles or images. You've just got to find the right database for you topic.

WHY CAN'T I JUST USE GOOGLE?

You can find some journal articles on Google, but if you use the right database you get more good quality research. A lot of web pages aren't checked for quality and they can be biased or out of date. In addition, with a database search, you are more likely to find the full text of the articles.

SELECT AN APPROPRIATE DATABASE(S) FOR YOUR TOPIC

From the library's website, go to a page called "Databases and Electronic Resources" Here you will find databases grouped by subject. Once you choose the appropriate subject, you will be taken to list of databases for the subject, with the most commonly used ones at the top.

IDENTIFY WHERE TO FIND FULL TEXT JOURNAL ARTICLES

If the database has no link to the full text, it doesn't mean the library doesn't have it. This is where you DO need the library catalogue to tell you if the library has the journal. Just copy and paste the journal title for your database results into the journal tab in the catalogue.