Finding Information
[GOVT1101 Australian Politics]

To assist you in finding appropriate resources and information and to develop library skills you should complete the LIBR1000 Library and Research Skills module. http://www.library.usyd.edu.au/skills/tutorials/esearch/

Unpack your Topic

It is important to take time to clarify what is expected of you in an assessment item before you start researching and writing. You need to think and plan your research before you start. Typing your question verbatim into a database won’t work, you need to:

1. Identify the keywords in your topic. A keyword is an important idea in the question or statement and helps you to decide on the approach you should take. Key words include:
   - Topic Words: highlight the major concepts in the assessment.
   - Directive words: give directions to the approach you should take, and the kind of response required in the assignment (e.g. ‘examine’, ‘analyse’, ‘compare’).

2. Search for defining or limiting words. This will clarify / limit what is required, you may need to think of alternate terms or synonyms to describe and focus your topic allowing you to limit the extent of your research and set boundaries.

3. Clarify any uncertain terms / unfamiliar vocabulary. You can use subject specific dictionaries and encyclopedias to assist in this. For example look at resources listed on the Government & International Relations Guide - eResources page.

Some further suggestions for finding resources are;

1. Finding books via the online catalogue:

Go to the Catalogue by clicking on Catalogue on the Library's Home Page, or go directly to http://opac.library.usyd.edu.au/.
The best place to start when looking for books is with the Keyword search. Keyword searching allows you to enter your own words - the key concepts that you have identified for your topic. Subject searching is not the best way to start, as you need to know the correct subject heading for your topic.

Once you have identified relevant books from your keyword search, you can then follow the links (subject headings) to find more book on the same topic. You can also find edited books on your topic by including the term **edited** in your keyword search.

The Catalogue is set up for Basic Keyword searching, which is fine if you only have one or two words you are looking for more sophisticated searches, choose the Advanced search.
It is quite easy to identify if a book is authored or edited. Look at the full catalogue record. At the top of the record you will find the bibliographic details of the book displayed. For an authored book these details will include the Author, title and publisher. For an edited book these details will include the title and publisher, but the editor will be included within the title field. For example

**Authored Book**

**Author** Vromen, Ariadne.

**Title** Powerscape : contemporary Australian politics / Ariadne Vromen; Katharine Gelber; Anika Gauja.

**Publisher** Crows Nest, N.S.W. : Allen & Unwin, 2009.

![Authored Book Details](image)

**Edited Book**

**Title** The Oxford companion to Australian politics / edited by Brian Galligan; Winsome Roberts.

**Publisher** South Melbourne, Vic. : Oxford University Press, 2007.

![Edited Book Details](image)

**2. Finding journal articles: Electronic Databases:**

Electronic Databases are used to search for journal articles on a topic. They are found on the Library’s home page by clicking on Databases and Electronic Resources on the menu bar.

The Library has hundreds of databases and ejournals. They are organised in alphabetical and subject order. At this stage you might not know the best ones to use, so check the subject listing for databases relevant to your research.
Two Australian databases that may be useful for you are;

**APA-FT:** (Australian Public Affairs Information Service – Full Text) [often called APAIS Full Text] This is a major Australian database for the social sciences. It is very useful for Australian political subjects. It indexes scholarly journals from 1978+. It also includes chapters in edited books containing collections of readings, and can be used to find significant newspaper articles such as those that appear on the editorial pages written by expert journalists. It contains the full text of some of the articles.

**AGIS Plus Text:** This database is produced by the Australian Attorney General’s Department. It covers all aspects of Australian law – including roles of government and constitutional law. 1975+. Full text is available for some references.

Alternatively you may want to use the **CrossSearch** Search Engine.

Through one simple Google-like search, CrossSearch provides access to journal & newspaper articles and books from the library catalogue, databases and ejournals. After doing your basic search you can refine your results by using the filter options listed to the left of the results page.

These allow you to limit your search to
- Scholarly or Peer Review Articles
- by document type (eg, book, journal article, newspaper article, etc)
- by date
- by subject
- by library location
2a. Constructing Your Search:

When using the electronic databases, you need to link your keywords together using Boolean logic. This search logic can also be used when using Internet search engines. For more information watch the Search Smarter Search Faster library tutorial.

AND

Keywords linked together with AND retrieve records that contain all of your search terms. It REFINES, and narrows your search.

Example:
australia AND constitution
parliament AND representation AND women

OR

Keywords linked together with OR retrieve records that contain any of your search terms. It is useful for when there is variation in your subject or there is variation in the spelling of your search terms. It EXPANDS your search.

Example:
laws or legislation or statutes
organisation or organization

NOT

Keyword linked together with NOT retrieves records that contain your first search term but removes any records that contain the keyword(s) that are after the NOT. EXCLUDES search terms.

Example:
power not electricity
NOT should be used carefully as it can exclude relevant articles.

Truncation:

Put an asterisk * at the end of a word stem to search for all possible endings to that word

Example:
Democra* - retrieves democracy, democratic, democratically etc.
Protest* - retrieves protest(s), protestant(s), and Protestantism etc.
(In most database platforms the symbol is *. If in doubt, click on the help icon in the database.)

Phrase Search:

To find phrases (words next to each other), use quotation marks around the phrase to group the terms together.

Example:
"Political Parties"
2b. What is a scholarly journal?

You need to assess the quality of any work before using and citing it in an assignment. Ideally, you are looking for scholarly works that have been peer reviewed, also known as refereed. Before it can be considered for publication, a journal article, in a peer reviewed journal, is read by other experts in the field and checked for accuracy and proper academic methods and standards.

Make sure you look at the WriteSite Unit 2: Evaluating sources - 2. Reputable and reliable academic sources: [http://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/m2/m2u2/m2u2s2/m2u2s2_1.htm](http://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/m2/m2u2/m2u2s2/m2u2s2_1.htm).

Once you have obtained material, make sure you evaluate it.

Here is a checklist to help you. The more "Yes" ticks the better!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This journal:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is refereed or peer-reviewed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contains articles that have a bibliography, in-text citations or footnotes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>includes an abstract for each article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is published by an academic press, scholarly organisation or society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has authors who have academic credentials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has few advertisements, usually limited to academic interests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contains articles that use the language or jargon of the discipline and formal academic writing rather than colloquialisms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reports on original research and contains substantial articles longer than a few pages.</td>
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Some of the ways you can check for these details include:

- looking to see the publisher’s name, editorial board and rules of submitting articles. In a print journal, this information will be on the inside cover; in an ejournal, it will be on the website.
- using a directory, like Ulrichs, that lists all the academic and scholarly journals in the field. You can find Ulrichs on the Library’s Databases and electronic resources webpage: [http://www.library.usyd.edu.au/databases/dbtitleu.html](http://www.library.usyd.edu.au/databases/dbtitleu.html).
- using the Library’s catalogues and databases to see if the authors have written other scholarly works.
3. Finding government reports

One easy way to find relevant material on your topic is to use the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library website. There are a number of ways to search for commonwealth government publications

- **Commonwealth Parliamentary Library**: Provides links to publications prepared by the Parliamentary Library’s Research Branch for the purpose of supporting the work of the Australian Parliament.


Use the library’s subject guide to **Government Documents - Australia** to find Internet Resources to locate full text government documents such as party policy documents, press releases/media statements and speeches in parliament. ([http://libguides.library.usyd.edu.au/ausgovdocs](http://libguides.library.usyd.edu.au/ausgovdocs))

Use the Official Websites of the Federal and State governments to also find policy documents and publications. Each government department will have a website, search the main menu for their publications.

For Example;
Finding Government Publications in the Library’s Collections

The Library receives a large range of Government publications. The main location for Government Publications is in the Law Library Compactus.

In this collection the publications are arranged by their geographic coverage and the type of publication.

For example:
G = Government publications
AUS = Commonwealth of Australia
P = Parliamentary Papers

If you are searching for Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers – you need to know that they are filed by a paper number within the year they were published. If you do not know the paper number, there are many indexes for Parliamentary Papers. Search the library catalogue for “Index parliamentary papers”. Online Indexes can be found on the Government’s Parlinfo search site http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/.

If a report is quite significant or the Library receives it on a regular basis (i.e. department annual reports), then extra copies may be included in the Library Collection. You can then search for specific reports through the Library catalogue.

Some tips for searching for government reports on the catalogue:
If searching by Author – remember you have to put country or state before the department name.

   e.g. Australia. Department of foreign affairs

Many reports become known colloquially by the chairperson’s name. If that is all the detail you have then search the catalogue by keyword.

   e.g. Burdekin Report on homeless children – you would search burdekin and homeless children.
You can also search for government documents in Google by adding site:.gov.au to your search box to indicate that you wish to search for documents with the Australian government domain name.

You can also use site: to search for other domain names such as .org.au to find organisations etc.

4. Finding newspaper articles

Many newspapers have web sites but they only give the current day’s news and if they have archives, require payment for access.

But other sources are available:

Use the Factiva database to locate the full text of many Australian and overseas newspapers, including the SMH (1986+) and The Australian (1996+).

Click on Databases and Electronic Resources from the Library menu, and then locate Factiva in the alphabetical sequence.

Type your search terms in the search box and choose the required dates and newspapers to search.

There is also the Proquest ANZ Newsstand - ProQuest Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) Newsstand offers access to leading Australian and New Zealand newspapers.
5. Web searching

You can use web search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Ask etc to search the web directly.

Remember to carefully assess sites found via the web, using such principles as:

- **Content**: substance, depth, uniqueness
- **Authority**: institutional affiliation, developer credentials. See if the page lists the author and institution that published the page and provides a way of contacting him/her
- **Accuracy**: (including currency): See if the page provides accurate information and it is objective in presenting the information.
- **Currency**: Check that the page is current and updated regularly (as stated on the page) and the links (if any) are also up-to-date.