Finding Material for Essays, Dissertations & Theses
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UCL Explore at www.ucl.ac.uk/library/explore searches a number of resources:-

- **UCL Reading Lists**: Easy access to course materials
- **All Resources**: Millions of electronic journal articles and other full-text resources
- **Library Catalogue**: Printed & electronic book and journal titles from UCL's standard Catalogue
- **Journal Articles**: Articles which have been published in electronic journals
- **Digital Collections**: UCL Library Services’ digitised documents
- **UCL Discovery**: Open access material from UCL’s publications repository, including theses
- **UCL Exam Papers**: Electronic copies of UCL’s Exam Papers
- **UCL Archives**: Records of archive material in UCL’s Special Collections
- **Journal Titles**: Journal titles to which UCL Library provides print and electronic access

So, when you are searching for information on a particular topic, where you see “In resource” just below the search box you can leave this to search for “All resources” and you will find details of books, journal articles, theses etc. However if you only want to find journal articles for example, you can limit your search by choosing this option as in the example overleaf:
As UCL subscribes to so many e-journals this sort of search will usually find thousands of results but you can sort them so that the most recent articles appear first by clicking on “Date – newest” at the top right-hand side of the screen:

If you click on “View Online” or [SFX@UCL](#) this should link through to the online version of the article that you have identified.

For in-depth literature searching UCL has access to hundreds of subject specific databases.

- discover what has been published on a particular subject
- identify journal articles
- identify book chapters in some cases, especially those in edited collections
- save time as they usually summarise articles in an abstract
- allow you to find out who has cited certain articles
- keep up to date with new publications in your field of interest
- confirm, check or verify bibliographic details in cases of doubt
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Some databases provide access to the full-text of e.g. journal articles, but where they don’t most of them link to full text via SFX if UCL Library Services has a subscription.

Our expert Librarians provide information about the databases that cover your subject area in Subject Guides available at:

www.ucl.ac.uk/library/subject-support/guides

Otherwise, learn more via our WISE faculty level tutorials:

www.ucl.ac.uk/library/trainingguides

All databases can be found in Explore or in the A-Z list at:

www.ucl.ac.uk/library/electronic-resources/databases

...as well as by subject in a drop-down box.

For details of scope, dates covered, and search tips see alongside the database link

Information contained within some databases cannot be found via Explore so it is often better to search them direct via Databases A-Z.

Theses

A copy of most UCL PhD Theses is held in our Store from 1910 to the present and they can be found in Explore. However, since UCL started to award its own degrees to students registering from 2007/2008 electronic versions have been submitted and in many cases theses are available in full text in UCL Discovery.

www.ucl.ac.uk/library/e-theses

Newspapers

We have access to thousands of current newspapers from around the world via NexisUK. Many of these regional, national and international titles go back to the middle of the 1980s.

For earlier publications there are various sources such as The Times Digital Archive as well as the 17th–18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers and The 19th Century British Library Newspapers.

The Guardian/Observer Archive is available via Proquest Historical Newspapers as follows:

The Guardian 1821–2003
The Observer 1791–2003

Newspaper databases can be accessed via Databases A-Z but for a complete list and more information see:-

www.ucl.ac.uk/library/electronic-resources/newspapers
For several databases on-site, and for most databases off-site, you will be prompted for your UCL computer username and password in order to access them but for seamless access to all resources go through WTS:-

www.ucl.ac.uk/isd-extra/common/windows/wts-web/

For further information on access and troubleshooting see:-

www.ucl.ac.uk/library/electronic-resources

General advice on searching

Databases differ from one to another but there are some general tips and considerations below. However, do read the specific help pages in each database that you use in case of exceptions.

- It is worth spending some time thinking about concepts or keywords to describe your topic, before you start.
- Most databases have basic search options where you just enter your keywords into a search box, combining them together at this point, or they have advanced search options where you can enter concepts into multiple search boxes and combine them by clicking on your chosen fields e.g. title, abstract etc.
- You can combine keywords with “AND”, “OR”, “NOT” (or in a rarer case “&”, “,” “_”) e.g. “children AND adults”, “children OR adults”, “children NOT adults”
- You can truncate concepts using an asterisk * e.g. politic* finds political, politics and politician (NB some databases may use other symbols such as $ or !)
- You can mask characters with a wildcard character such as a question mark ? e.g. wom?n finds women and woman (NB some databases may use an asterisk * for this)
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- You can sometimes combine these elements in one search e.g. “wom*n* AND child*” should find records with women, women’s, woman, womanhood together with child, children, childhood etc.

- In some databases, if you put in two words together this will be treated as a phrase. However, in many databases, and indeed in most search interfaces, you will need to add double quotation marks to search for a phrase, e.g. “ancient greece”

- Many databases have indexes or thesauri which are lists of terms that are used to group records together under the same subject headings for consistency. For example, in medical databases you will usually find that records for “heart attack” are grouped under the heading “myocardial infarction”. So, it is worth exploring the thesaurus in individual databases

- Databases differ in how you search for authors: Doe J*; Doe-J*; and Doe, J. are all examples but there is usually some on-screen help to guide you with this

- In some databases you can build up your searches step-by-step by creating what are known as sets. You can then combine searches by putting the sets together as you go along, rather than entering all your keywords into the search box at the start. So, you could do your search on wom*n, then your search on child*, and then access your search history screen where you can combine the two concepts by typing “#1 AND #2” (which means Set 1 and Set 2). This is particularly useful if you want to narrow your searches as you go along depending on the number of hits you get

- In most databases you can use brackets around concepts in a search to determine the order in which you wish the database to look for your terms. This is particularly useful when you have alternative words for one concept e.g. in the search “(education OR learning) AND (adult* NOT child*)” the database will perform the first bracketed search first, then combine it with the second set of brackets in much the same way as you would if you were building up sets

- All databases allow you to search for keywords in specific fields which are sometimes denoted by two letters e.g. article title (Ti), abstract (AB), author (AU), journal title (JN in some databases, SO in others)