A Guide to Library Research for Biology

Article databases (from on campus)*

- BioOne - http://www.bioone.org
- PubMed – http://tinyurl.com/25ad7d
- *From off campus, don't enter these addresses directly, but rather access the databases through the library's web page (see: Getting to the databases, below). You'll be prompted to enter your NSU username and password for off-campus access.

Getting to the databases

From the library's main page (http://library.nsuok.edu/), click on Articles and Databases, then on Natural Sciences and Mathematics or, for medical databases, Health Sciences.

Using the library catalog

Searching for local print resources is an important part of the process. However, do remember that our catalog reflects only local holdings, whereas the databases/periodical indexes are much broader.

- Main access to the library catalog is at http://library2.nsuok.edu
- Many of the same techniques that are helpful in searching the databases are also helpful for searching the catalog (Boolean operators, truncation).
- If you don't have specific authors/titles to search for, develop searches based on keywords. If you find relevant material, consider searching using subject headings attached to that material.

Google Scholar

Google Scholar should not replace the library's databases and indexes, but it can be a useful supplement. Note its use by BioOne for citations.

Interlibrary Loan

The library's Interlibrary Loan (ILL) service allows you to borrow or access articles, books, and other materials that we do not own. If you find a citation for an article or book to which NSU doesn't have access, consider using ILL.

- NSU Tahlequah/Muskogee students can access ILL at http://illiad.nsuok.edu/illiad/OKN/logon.html.
- NSUBA students should go to http://illiad.nsuok.edu/illiad/N@U/logon.html.

Tips and Tricks

Develop searches by selecting relevant keywords (e.g. vancomycin, antibiotics, antibiotic resistance, MRSA, Staphylococcus aureus, etc.) and search them in combination in the appropriate fields (abstract, full-text) using Boolean operators.

Remember the two most important Boolean search operators, AND and OR. If your searches are retrieving too many hits, try narrowing your search with AND (e.g. S. aureus AND antibiotic resistance). If you're getting too few, try OR (e.g. S. aureus OR C. difficile).
Remember to employ truncation of your search terms when appropriate, (e.g. preda* for predator, predators, predation, predatory, etc.). Some databases auto-truncate your search terms, but don't count on it.

Don't forget print resources! Being able to access e-journals and other electronic resources is convenient, but some of the best resources are in print in the reference section or elsewhere in the library. You can use the library's catalog to find these resources.

**Citation Management**

It is not uncommon for research papers to refer to 30 or more other works. Managing lists of citations is made much easier by citation/reference management software like RefWorks and EndNote. NSU students and faculty now have access to RefWorks, but you may also consider:

- **Zotero** (free, open-source, available for Windows, Mac OS X, Linux)
- **CiteULike** (free, Web-based)

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