

# Academic Sources of Information Advanced Searching



“Critical appraisal of **up-to-date** and/or **appropriate literature**.  
Recognition of different perspectives. Very good use of a **wide range of sophisticated source material**. ”

The above statement is taken from the generic assessment criteria for undergraduate study. There are of course other criteria, however selecting a wide range of appropriate literature and using it critically is the focus of this guide.

## What is an advanced search?

An advanced search gives you more control over your literature search. You will usually see multiple search boxes with options to choose to search for a particular word in a specific field such as title or author name. You will also be able to combine search terms using the Boolean Operators **AND**, **OR** and **NOT**.

At postgraduate level, you are encouraged to use advanced searching to find relevant academic or professional sources for your assignments. These may be academic journal articles, conference papers, reports, newspapers, along with books and ebooks. Using a wide range of sources is one of the ways you will be able to corroborate or refute arguments or evidence.

## Where to begin? Key concepts and keywords

Start by writing down your ideas—this will help you identify your key concepts. Your key concepts can be your first keywords. Once you’ve done this try to think of as many alternative keywords as you can. Think of synonyms, related words, abbreviations, acronyms, and vernacular expressions.

Example: **The impact of social media on recent outbreaks of civil unrest.**

Alternative search terms may be:

**Social Media:** social network, social networking, Twitter, Facebook,

**Civil Unrest:** conflict, revolution, riot, rioting

## Consider limits to your search

Are there aspects of your topic you need to focus on? Are you looking at a specific time period? Are you interested in a specific demographic or a particular instance?

If you can give this some thought in advance you will easily be able to refine your searches.

Example: **The impact of social media on recent outbreaks of civil unrest.**

- ◇ Recent would mean we should limit our search by date.
- ◇ A particular instance to search for would be London Riots 2012 (this may mean adding extra search terms to the list of keywords)

## Combine your search terms

Use Boolean Operators AND, OR and NOT to combine your terms.

**OR:** broadens your search

**AND:** narrows your search

**NOT:** excludes keywords



## Decide what sources of information you are looking for

Books/ebooks for example are great for developing an understanding of a new topic while academic journals are good sources of the latest research on a topic. What you're looking for will dictate where you search for the information.

You can begin your search for all resources at the library web page <http://library.sunderland.ac.uk> where you will be asked to select whether you are looking for books/ebooks or journal articles. If you choose books/ebooks you will be taken to the **Library Catalogue** and if you choose journal articles you will be taken to **Discover**.

You can also search Discover for conference papers, reports and reviews.

"social media"	TI Title	Search	Clear	?
OR	"Social Network"	Select a Field (optional)		
AND	"civil unrest"	SU Subject Terms		
OR	Riot*	Select a Field (optional)	+	-

## Refine Results

### Current Search

#### Find all my search terms:

TI "social media" OR "Social Network" AND SU ...

#### Expanders

Also search within the full text of the articles

Apply equivalent subjects

#### Limiters

Untick to Discover more...

### Limit To

- Full Text
- Peer Reviewed
- Institutional Repository Only

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Options set

### Source Types

- All Results
- Books (1,256,217)
- Academic Journals (484,996)
- Biographies (63,592)
- News (50,982)
- Magazines (48,743)

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### Subject

## Review your results

Use the limiters within Discover to further refine your search—you will be able to select a publication date range, and the source type you are looking for.

Look at the articles abstracts to help you determine whether they will be useful. Make a note of any useful words that you could add to your list of keywords.

## Adjust your search terms and search again

Combine different keywords and choose to search different fields. The first search you do will not be the last one. As you find useful articles you may decide to add other keywords.

Although most of the time you will find what you need on Discover, there may be times when you will need to go directly to a specific subject database. Check your subject key resources page to learn more about the subject databases in your discipline:

<http://library.sunderland.ac.uk/services-and-support/subject/>

## Useful links:

- ◇ [Tips and tricks for advanced searches](#)
- ◇ [Study Skills Guides](#)