To Use the EBSCOhost Periodical Databases

This guide will focus on using EBSCOhost databases, which are the databases you are most likely to use, but most databases work generally the same way, with different tools available. First, if you are accessing the databases from off campus, you will need the password that allows remote access to the databases. To do this, from the library homepage (http://rocky.edu/academics/library/) select Remote Access. If you are on campus, skip to the next page of this guide.

You will get a short message stating that you will need your username and password. Click continue, and enter your username and password at the prompt. This will take you to the following screen:

**Subscribed Databases**

Welcome to the RMU Remote Access Page. This page allows access to subscribed databases. Many of the databases listed below require the use of a username and password. They are listed below the database name and information. Click on the database of choice, then put in the proper information if requested.

- **EBSCOhost** - Search EBSCOhost Web for multiple periodical databases covering a variety of subjects.
- **InfoTrac Academic OneFile** - General periodical databases.
- **Health and Wellness Resource Center** - Includes Alternative Health.
Write down or copy to a blank document the username and password for EBSCOhost. You can then click on EBSCOhost from this site to reach the databases.

If you are in the library or on campus and beginning from the library homepage, select Periodical Databases. This will lead you to a page with links to several different databases as well as Journal Finder and Citation Guides, which will be discussed later in this guide; select EBSCOhost Services.

Either of these links (from Remote Access or from Periodical Databases) will lead you to a page with several more links listed. We will be using the first resource listed, EBSCOhost Web. Below that is EBSCOhost Mobile, which is the same site configured to work on mobile devices. Below that are several non-periodical reference resources that we have available through EBSCOhost.

Select EBSCOhost Web. This page lists all of the databases that are available through EBSCOhost. They all look and work the same, so we will only explore Academic Search Elite which is the broadest of the databases, in this guide. EBSCOhost also offers several subject specific databases that can be accessed from this list. There are a lot of functions available within these databases; we’ll focus on the most
important for getting your research started. If you wish to search more than one database at a time, you can click the box next to the databases you want to search and select continue; otherwise you can simply click on the title of the database; for our purposes, click on Academic Search Elite.

Within Academic Search Elite, the most important things on the main search screen are the search bar and the search options.
The search bar is where you will input your search terms. Once you are more familiar with searching the database you may wish to try an advanced search; the option to do this is just below the search bar, but for this guide stay with the basic search.

The search options provide search modes and limitations for your search.

**Search Modes and Expanders**

- **Search modes**
  - Checkbox: Boolean/Phrase
  - Checkbox: Find all my search terms
  - Checkbox: Find any of my search terms
  - Link: Smart Text Searching

The default search mode is “Find any of my search terms,” but if you’re getting a lot of results that don’t relate to what you’re searching for, you may want to switch to “Find all of my search terms.” For instance, say you’re looking for information on medieval monastic libraries. If you simply did a search string of ‘medieval monastic libraries,’ “Find any” would first bring back results with many of the keywords, but it would also give you results including only the word medieval, for instance, with no mention of monasteries or libraries. One way to avoid this is to use the Boolean operator AND between each word to tell the computer you want each word, but you can also just select “Find all” in the search modes box. For now, let’s keep it on “Find any.”

The most important search limiters and the ones you’re most likely to want to use are the limiters for Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals and Full Text.

**Limit your results**

- **Full Text**
  - Checkbox

- **Published Date**
  - Select: Months, Year, Periodical

Unless your professor tells you otherwise, you will always want only articles from scholarly/peer reviewed journals. Peer reviewed journals are journals in which each article must be evaluated by other researchers in that field before it can be published. For something to be published in the peer-reviewed journal Nature, biologists will read the article and decide if the science is valid before it can be published. In non-peer reviewed journals, only a general editor decides if an article should be published, and many claims and “facts” can get published that aren’t necessarily true. The same holds true for every field of study.

The full text limiter does just what it sounds like: it only retrieves articles that you can view the full text of on your computer. This can be very helpful if you’re in a hurry and need the article immediately, but it is also very limiting in what you will retrieve. If you have the time to request an article through interlibrary loan (discussed later), it is better to leave this option unchecked so that you have more options for articles that you can use.
Other limiters include document type, publication, and date, most of which can be applied after your first search.

Let’s go ahead and use ‘medieval monastic libraries’ in a basic keyword search and see what happens, with no limiters selected and all the defaults in place. Enter the terms and hit search.

There’s a lot going on here, so let’s take it a bit at a time. First, at the top you can see the number of results brought back: 593,180. Don’t worry about this big number; you’ll be narrowing down your search quite a bit. You’ll also most likely find articles to use before you have to go through nearly that many results. The far right column is just news that EBSCO has pulled based on your search terms, and generally won’t be of any use, unless you’re searching for information on a very current issue. The left hand column is where you can refine, or limit, your search now that you’ve seen your first set of results. You can see many of the same limiters as you saw on the first search page: you can limit by local holdings, full text, scholarly journals, publication date, and publication (“source”) type, among others (hidden by the “Show More” link). If you scroll down a bit, you’ll see a few more options in the left column, including the options to limit your search by subject, publication, company, geography, and industry.

The large middle column, the search results, is where you can start to see what’s available on your topic.
Some of these don’t look very promising, but it’s important to remember that you can’t tell everything about an article from this page; often you have to investigate further before you’ll know if you can use it. In the upper right corner, you can see that you have a drop down menu labeled Relevance. Relevance is what it’s sorting the results by; you can change this to sort the results by date of publication, author, or source instead.

In the list of search results, you see the article’s title, the citation information (author, journal, date, and issue), and subjects of the article. You’ll notice some words are bold; EBSCO is highlighting where it found your search terms. Under each result to the left, you can see a small picture of a page and the words Academic Journal; this is telling you what type of publication the article came out of. In this case they’re all academic journals, but without the “Scholarly” limiter you may also get results from magazines, reviews, newspapers, or other general publications. At the bottom of each result it says either “Request this item through interlibrary loan” or “PDF Full Text;” there may also be some that say “HTML Full Text.” This is telling you right off the bat whether you can access full text online or not. You can access it right away by clicking on the link here, but you’ll want to look at more details about the article first. Do this by clicking on the article’s title. Let’s look at article 3, “Sex on the Stage (and in the Library) of an Early Medieval Convent: Hrotsvit of Gandersheim,” which has full text.
In the middle you see the citation information – title, authors, and journal information – and subject terms again, along with some keywords the author assigned to the article. This is very important. An abstract is essentially a summary of the article, and this is what you’ll want to read to determine if you want to spend the time reading the entire article. If you do, to the left you can click PDF Full Text to view the article. In some cases there will be the option to view HTML Full Text; the difference is that HTML Full Text is laid out like a webpage while PDF Full Text is a scan of the original article, so you can see it laid out in its intended format. If full text isn’t available, you have a few options. Return to the library’s list of periodical databases and select Journal Finder.
Here, enter the name of the journal that published the article that you’re interested in. We’ll use Orbis Litterarum, the journal that “Sex on the Stage…” was published in, as an example. Click search.

**Title Search Results**

I found 1 title that match your search.

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<th>Orbis Litterarum</th>
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This is the only title that your search found. If you didn’t find what you need, you can place an Interlibrary Loan request.

This screen tells you that you can access the journal online and through delivery, or interlibrary loan. If the Rocky library carries the title in physical format, there will be a book icon in the Print column. Click the computer icon to see which volumes you can access. If there were a book icon signifying physical issues in the library, clicking on the book icon would lead you to the catalog record for the journal, which would list the volumes held in the library. For Orbis Litterarum,

**Online Access**

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<td>Orbis Litterarum</td>
<td>Ebsco Academic Search Elite</td>
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<td>Orbis Litterarum</td>
<td>Ebsco Literary Reference Center</td>
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you can see that it’s available in Ebsco Academic Search Elite and Ebsco Literary Reference Center; the links under Journal Title will take you there. You can also see that in both databases, full text coverage begins with the issue from February 1, 1998 and ends 12 months from the current date. If what you’re looking for is within these dates, simply click on the journal title to access the list of issues available, and find what you need by date. If what you’re looking for falls outside of these dates, or the library doesn’t have any access to the full text of the journal you want, you’ll need to order the article through interlibrary loan. Go back to the article’s record in Academic Search Elite; we’ll look at the first result that we got earlier, “Hugh of St Victor…”
On the left you’ll see “Request this item through interlibrary loan” instead of PDF (or HTML) Full Text. Click on that and you’ll be taken to a form where you can fill out your name and contact information; once you submit the form the article will be requested by our staff from another library. This is almost always free; if it will cost, we’ll contact you and ask if you want to pay for it before ordering it. Once we have it, we’ll send it to you in an email. Getting articles through interlibrary loan usually only takes a few days, and sometimes you’ll get it the same day you request it!

If you’re interested in using an article for your paper, EBSCO offers a few other helpful features as well, which can be found on the right side of the article details screen under Tools.

The first of these, Add to folder, is a helpful tool that allows you to save your research for later. By clicking this option the article will be put into a folder that you can access later in your session, so you can save multiple interesting articles and then come back and look at them all together. You can access your saved articles by clicking on the Folder link at the top of the screen. This only works while you remain on the EBSCO website; if you want to save the articles for use at a later date, click the sign in link at the top of the screen, register (it’s free), and then save the articles to your folder; now they will be there the next time you sign in. Other useful features in the Tools list include options to print the article information, email it to yourself or someone else, and to generate the citation in MLA, APA, or another format by clicking Cite.
The citation will pop up above the article information, with the different citation formats listed alphabetically. Be careful with these: always check what it provides against the official style guides because EBSCO's citations can be formatted wrong.

If you can't find any articles after doing your first search, you have several ways of continuing to search. If you're getting too many irrelevant results, you can change your search to find all of your terms rather than 'any,' so that you retrieve results with each term in it rather than results with only one of the terms, as explained earlier. On the left side of the search results screen under Limit To, select Show More.

This will open a pop-up with the same search options that you saw on the very first search page; here you can select “Find all my search terms.”
This will limit your results to show more relevant articles and can result in severely limited results, if your search terms are too narrow or too many; in this case finding articles with all of the words medieval, monastic, and libraries brings back only 17 results. There may be articles that don’t use the word medieval that aren’t being brought back because of the ‘find all’ requirement; be very careful in your search terms if you use this option. Often ‘find all’ will help you find exactly what you need, but not always. If you can’t find what you need here, you may need to go back to ‘find any,’ broaden your search, and/or reduce or change your keywords. Try to think of synonyms for what you’re searching for or different forms of the words; instead of ‘medieval,’ try ‘middle ages,’ instead of ‘monastic,’ try ‘monastery’ or ‘convent,’ and so on. The database will only bring back the words you put in, so if an author chose to use a different word, the article won’t come up. If you’re searching for a phrase, for instance ‘middle ages,’ put it in quotation marks: “middle ages.” This will tell the database that you only want articles where the words in quotation marks occur in order. You can also use the Boolean operators AND, NOT, and OR to signify that both words (or more, with an ‘and’ between each) must be found (medieval AND libraries), that you want articles that contain one word but do not contain another (medieval NOT renaissance), or that results with either or both search terms will work (monastery OR convent). It can take a lot of different searches before you find what you’re looking for. Spelling is also extremely important; unlike Google, databases won’t search for a real word if you misspell it – they search for the misspelling.

There are a few easy ways to come up with search ideas. Within the details page for each article you are provided with a list of subjects that have been assigned to the article.

Hugh of St Victor (1096–1141) and Anglo-French Cartography.

Authors: Tekla, Dan
Document Type: Article
Subject Terms: MEDIEVAL geography, Maps
CHURCH history, 12th century
MEDIEVAL monasteries
MEDIEVAL architecture
CHURCH History
ARCHITECTURE
Architecture
Topography
Company/Entity: AULUSSTRENS

These lists can often provide you with search terms you hadn’t thought of. You can click on any of these subject terms or author supplied keywords to bring up all of the articles in the database with the same subject. You can also click on “Find Similar Results” in the left column. This will search for other articles
with the words from this entry, so this is particularly useful if you find a really good article and want more like it. Take note that you will lose any refinements when you do this, so if you're searching for only peer-reviewed articles, for instance, or only articles from the last ten years, you'll need to reapply those limiters.

Another way to find search term ideas or even specific articles to look for is what is called chasing footnotes or chasing references. If you find a good article, take a look at the articles that that author has used in writing his or her paper, which you'll find either in footnotes on each page or in the list of references at the end of the article. You may find some articles with promising-sounding names that you want to look for and request; if not, you can still often get ideas for search terms by looking at the words used in those article titles.

If, during all of your searching and following one link and another, you decide you want to go back to where you were before or to an earlier search, you can simply click on “Search History” underneath the search bar.

This will open a list of all of the searches that you’ve performed so far. Click on “View Results” on the right to go back to that search. Click “Search History” again to close this list.
As mentioned earlier, EBSCOhost databases provide citations for the articles via the Cite tool, but you should double-check these citations against the style guide for whichever style you’re using. The style guides are available in the library and online. To access them online, from the Periodical Databases page on the library website select Citation Guides.

Periodical Databases

- **Notice**: If you need access to these databases and you are not on campus, you need to login using the remote access page.

Citation Guides

- APA Style Guide (Purdue University)
- APA Style for Electronic Resources
- MLA Style Guide (Kingwood College Library)
- Medical Citation Guide
- EasyBib (Bibliography maker)

Here you can find links to several different style guides as well as three websites that create citations for you: Citation Machine, Bibme, and EasyBib. For this last one, EasyBib, which has the most options, you can simply use it on campus or, in order to use it off campus, create a free account while on campus that you can then use off campus.

Always remember that if you’re having any trouble or have any questions, the library staff is always happy to help! Call us at 406.657.1087 or email ill@rocky.edu with questions.