

POLS 401: Senior Seminar in American Politics, Fall 2002

Researching Quality of Life

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Advice on Researching Quality of Life

Quality of Life is an interdisciplinary topic that can be studied from the vantage point of psychology, philosophy, sociology, political science, economics... Similar concepts may be expressed in different words across disciplines—or the same words may represent different concepts depending on the field of study. These tips should help you bridge the gap between the concept in your head and the language of individual indexes/databases.

- Consider possible variants for your search terms
- Explore electronic sources via keyword searches, and follow the “leads”/links with the relevant descriptors/subject headings to see more items categorized under those areas
- Truncate to retrieve different word forms:
*democra** finds *democrat, democracy, democratically, democratique*
(truncation symbol is not * in every database or catalog — check your help documentation)
- Use Boolean OR to expand your options:
values OR beliefs finds items including *values, beliefs, or both values and beliefs*
“OR = More!”
- Use Boolean AND when you want items where the subjects “coincide:”
sweden AND crime finds items containing both terms. AND = fewer, more focused results
- Jot down what you’ve used and what descriptors/subject headings look promising
- And of course... ***you are always welcome to talk to me about your research.*** Drop by the Reference Desk, or, you can contact me to make an appointment (email: sgass@wheatonma.edu; phone: x3700).

Finding Books

Use **ELIZA** to find what Wallace Library owns.

>> **Access** from [Library Home Page](#) or at <http://library.wheatoncollege.edu/>

Use **WorldCat** to find items on your topic owned by other libraries around the world.

It is possible to order books (**not** videos, rare/old books, articles or journal issues) via Interlibrary Loan directly from WorldCat. Ask at the Reference Desk to learn how to use this huge database effectively.

>> **Access** from the *Wallace Library Electronic Resources* page:

<http://www.wheatoncollege.edu/library/resources/electronic> [under *Reference Databases*]

ELIZA uses Library of Congress Subject Headings to categorize material.

Here are some **sample Subject Headings** to try in ELIZA, WorldCat, or other library catalogs:

- Country X – Economic conditions
- Country X – Social conditions
- Social surveys – Country X
- Happiness
- Quality of life – Country X
- Social indicators – Country X

Statistics Gateways (collections of links)

US *FedStats*

<http://www.fedstats.gov>

US governmental statistics finding tool. Browsing for your topic may work better than searching for it.

Development Gateway

<http://www.developmentgateway.org/DataStatistics>

National and international organizations that offer data, or information about data, at their sites. Examples: UN Crime & Justice, World Tourism Organization.

OFFSTATS: Official Statistics on the Web

<http://www2.auckland.ac.nz/lbr/stats/offstats/OFFSTATSmain.htm>

Look up official statistics by country, region, or topic. Focus is on free, current statistics; some data are downloadable in text or spreadsheet formats.

Statistics from Social Science Information Gateway (SOSIG)

<http://sosig.esrc.bris.ac.uk/statistics>

From the Institute for Learning and Research Technology at the University of Bristol, UK. Searchable. SOSIG (say “sausage”) is well worth knowing about for all kinds of social science topics.

WorldCat

>> Access from the *Wallace Library Electronic Resources* page:

<http://www.wheatoncollege.edu/library/resources/electronic> [under *Reference Databases*]

Since it also includes web sites as well as print materials, WorldCat can be considered a statistics gateway of sorts. Click Internet Resources box and use your country name and “statistics” or “data” as search terms (keyword and/or subject).

Individual Statistics Sources

US *General Social Survey*

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/GSS>

American values and attitudes surveyed since 1972. Includes codebook with question text; you can perform some statistical analysis of responses online.

US *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 121st ed., 2001

Ref HA 202 .U5 2001.

“The standard summary of statistics on the social, political, and economic organization of the United States.” See source notes for leads to reports from which statistics were taken.

Human Development Report, United Nations Development Programme

Ref HD72 .H85 1996-present [latest in print: 2001]

Also online, 1990-present, at <http://hdr.undp.org/reports> [latest online: 2002]

Split between essays on annual themes (statistics and valuable sidebars throughout) and tables covering the full range of Human Development Indicators. Annual themes have included “Human Rights and Human Development” and “Globalization with a Human Face.”

Illustrated Book of World Rankings, 2001

Ref HA155 .K87 2001

See how your country stacks up in a variety of rankings: environment, health & social services, culture, and more.

Statistical Yearbook, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, UN, 45th ed., 1998, [Using] Data available as of 30 November 2000

Ref HA 12.5 .U63 1998

“The major purpose of the Statistical Yearbook is to provide in a single volume a comprehensive compilation of internationally available statistics on social and economic conditions and activities at world, regional and national levels, covering roughly a 10-year period.”

Statistical Yearbook, UNESCO

In print, 1990-1999: Ref L101.A2 U54

Online: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/en/stats/stats0.htm>

Statistics related to education and literacy, science and technology, and culture and communication.

Note: Print version ceased publication. Online version includes database of education data (1970-1997), 1999 Yearbook statistics, and July 2001 literacy estimates. More stats are said to be coming.

See also: *World Education Report 2000*, <http://www.unesco.org/education/information/wer/htmlENG/tablesmenu.htm>

Wellbeing of Nations: A Country-by-Country Index of Quality of Life and the Environment

Ref GE140 .P74 2001

Interesting hybrid of environmental and human-centered data yields measures of overall quality of life.

World Development Indicators 2001, World Bank

Ref HC 59.15. W656 2001

Statistics on economy, demographics, social indicators, environment, markets, infrastructure, technology, trade, aid, labor.

See also: *World Bank Atlas 2002* -- Ref HC 59.15.W567 2002

Excerpts of *World Development Indicators*, visualized through maps.

World Database of Happiness, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

>> **Access:** on Wallace Library Atrium PCs #6, 7 and 8

Some portions also online: <http://www.eur.nl/fsw/research/happiness>

This MS Access database contains 1) bibliographic database of publications on happiness and 2) statistics from happiness studies. Stats are searchable by nation, public, and methodology. Question text, mean response, standard deviation, and conversion to 10-point scale for easy comparison included. Contact Shana Gass if you want to use this resource!

World Values Survey: See books edited by Ronald Inglehart (on Reserve for class & in the Stacks.)

Reference Works for Background Research

Countries and Their Cultures, 4v., 2001

Ref GN307 .C68 2001

From the international association Human Relations Area Files, Inc., at Yale. Contributors are social scientists and others with first-hand knowledge. Topics include public space, marriage and family, political life, and gender roles. Bibliographies of recommended readings are included.

Country Studies: Area Handbook Series from the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>

Wallace owns many in print too. Search ELIZA by keyword for *country X AND country study*.

In-depth reports on 101 countries, most published between 1988-1998. “Originally intended to focus primarily on lesser known areas of the world or regions in which U.S. forces might be deployed.” Missing are Canada, France, the UK, and other Western nations, some African countries—and the US!

***Europa World Year Book*, 2v., 2001**

Ref JN1 .E85

Look up individual nations to read summaries of recent history, economic affairs, social welfare, education. Includes recent statistics: demography, economic sectors, finance & trade, transport, tourism, communications media, education. National constitutions are included.

***International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 26 vols., 2001**

Ref H41 .I58 2001

Get background on social science topics from this large and authoritative set. Sample entries: materialism, happiness, alienation. Use the index—relevant material can be scattered throughout, especially in a set of this bulk.

***World Factbook*. 2001**

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook>

Brought to you by the CIA. “Basic intelligence provides the fundamental and factual reference material on a country or issue.” Brief sketches of nations with maps and statistics available as of January 2001.

Indexes/Databases for Finding Articles

>> ***Access databases*** through *Wallace Library Electronic Resources, Alphabetical List*:

<http://www.wheatoncollege.edu/library/resources/electronic/alpha.html>

***Anthropological Literature*, 1984-present**

Indexes journal articles and essays in anthropology and archaeology. *Ask at Reference Desk to be signed in.*

***EconLit*, 1969-present**

Indexes journal articles, books and working papers in economics. *Ask at Reference Desk to be signed in.*

***PAIS International*, 1972-present**

Indexes journals articles, books, directories, conference papers, pamphlets, reports, and government documents on political, social, and public policy issues.

***PSYCIInfo*, 1984-present**

Indexes the scholarly literature of psychology, including journal articles, books, book chapters, dissertations. Includes some full-text (about 50 journals published by the American Psychological Association.)

***SocioFile*, 1974-present**

Indexes journal articles, dissertations, conference papers, and books in sociology and related disciplines.

***Wilson Social Sciences Abstracts*, 1984-present**

Indexes articles in 350+ key international, English-language periodicals in the social sciences, including anthropology, area studies, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology.

Good luck to all of you with this challenging project! Don't hesitate to contact me if you get stuck, need ideas about where else to look, or would like to make sure you are getting the most out of electronic indexes/databases.

— Shana Gass, Reference/Instruction Librarian
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