

LITERATURE REVIEW GUIDE

Professor Joseph P. Cammarano
Reference/Instruction Librarian Shana Gass
[sgass@wheatonma.edu; x3736]

Tips for an Efficient & Effective Literature Review

- 1. Start gathering information now.**
Searching, locating, ordering, reading, writing, citing and thinking all take time! Literature review is an organic process: expect twists and turns.
- 2. Don't beat your head against the wall!**
Library research can be complicated! See a reference librarian if you encounter difficulties. We can help you begin your research, track down a specific piece of information, or strategize when you are finding too little—or too much—on your topic.
- 3. Identify key search terms present in your research hypothesis. Jot down alternative search terms and “hooks” that will help you find relevant information.**
This list will evolve as you continue to read and search. See *Search Strategy worksheet*.
- 4. Do some background reading on your topic.**
...for the big picture, ideas on how to narrow your topic, suggested further readings, specialized vocabulary for future searching. See *Finding Books* and *Reference Materials for Background Research*.
- 5. The heart of a lit review is a body of scholarly, peer-reviewed articles that illuminate your topic.**
Use at least two of the *Key Indexes for Finding Empirical Political Science Articles*.
- 6. Locate the most current scholarship available on your topic.**
After you have a solid start with finding and reading your scholarly articles, your “current awareness strategy” can include scanning tables of contents of key journals (in print or online) for the newest articles, and making a point of looking for conference proceedings in indexes and on the Web.
See *Key Indexes* and *Web Sources*.
- 7. Mine bibliographies for new sources and to evaluate the importance of individual works or authors.**
Look for bibliographies in scholarly journal articles and books (including reference books). Bibliographies can also be published as full-length books. Review articles summarizing research in a field are also useful.
- 8. Evaluate what you find—both while searching and when you have the item in hand.**
Use clues from abstracts, book reviews, bibliographies, introductions, tables of contents. Is the source relevant? Is the approach taken appropriate? Is the source reputable? What is the audience addressed? What are the author's biases and assumptions? Is evidence used appropriately to construct a convincing argument?
- 9. Know how and when to cite your sources.**
For this class you will be using the APA citation style. See *Guides to Writing & Citing*.
- 10. Keep careful notes on sources.**
Avoid inadvertent plagiarism by accurately indicating direct quotes, and understanding how to paraphrase properly. Avoid last-minute scrambling: record complete bibliographic information for all sources.

Finding Books

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

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

Use **keyword searching** to identify material, remembering to look for relevant Subject Headings (ELIZA uses the official Library of Congress Subject Headings.)

ELIZA lets you browse Subject Headings directly via a **subject search**. Here are some **sample Subject Headings** to try in ELIZA, or any other library catalog:

- Elections – Statistics
- South Africa – Politics and Government
- Social surveys – United States
- Elections – United States
- Mass media – Political Aspects
- Public opinion

Reference Works for Background Research

Titles listed below are just sample Reference Books—there are many more in the Reference Room on the main floor of the Library, some of them quite specialized, mostly shelved under the “J’s.”

Dictionaries

Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science: A Users' Guide to Its Terms, 1999
Ref JA61 .B43 1999

International Relations: A Political Dictionary, 1995
Ref JX1226 .P55 1995

Encyclopedias

Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, 2 vols., 2001
Ref JK1967 .C662 2001
Covers national and gubernatorial contests.

Congressional Quarterly's Guide to the Presidency, 2 vols., 1996
Ref JK516 .C57 1996

Encyclopedia of Arms Control and Disarmament, 3 vols., 1993
Ref JX1974 .E57 1993

Encyclopedia of Democracy, 4v., 1995
Ref JC423 .E53 1995

International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 26 vols., 2001
Ref H41 .I58 2001

Get background on social science topics from this large, authoritative set. Sample entries: media effects, political money & party finance, alienation. Use the index—relevant material can be scattered through the set.

A New Handbook of Political Science, 1996
Ref JA66 .N49 1996

Political Philosophy: Theories, Thinkers, Concepts, 2001
Ref JA71 .P6226 2001

Reference Works for Background Research (cont'd)

Almanacs and Yearbooks

Publications summarizing events on an annual basis. May include biographies, statistics, chronologies, organizational listings. *Earlier volumes may be on the Stacks level: check ELIZA.*

- *Almanac of American Politics*, 1972,1976- [online access 1998-]
Ref JK1012.A44
Online: <http://nationaljournal.com/members/almanac>
- *Book of the States*, 1941- [some volumes missing]
Ref JK2403 .B6
- *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1961-
Ref JK1 .C66
- *Congressional Quarterly's Politics in America*, 1990-
Ref JK1010 .P64
- *Europa World Year Book*, 2v., 1989-
Ref JN1 .E85
Information on international organizations and nations of the world. Summaries of recent events, economic affairs, social welfare, education. Includes recent statistics, list of important national organizations.
- *Massachusetts Political Almanac*, 1981/82, 1987/88-
Ref JK3130 .A62
- *Municipal Year Book*, 1949- [some missing volumes]
Ref JS344.C5 A24
- *Political Handbook of the World*, 1975-
Ref JF37 .P6

Bibliographies

Listings of publications on a particular topic. Keep your eye out for bibliographies in articles and books. Take advantage of library research that has already been done!

Some sample book-length bibliographies:

- *Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography* Ref DJK26 .Z9947 2001
- *The United States Congress: An Annotated Bibliography, 1980-1993* Ref JK1061.Z9 G64 1995
- *Women in Modern American Politics: A Bibliography, 1900-1995* Ref HQ1236.5.U6 Z92 1997

Guides to Writing & Citing

Guides to Citing Sources from Wallace Library

<http://www.wheatoncollege.edu/Library/HelpGuides/citing.html>

Listing of citation guides in Wallace Library, links to online citation information for answers to quick questions.

Political Science Student Writer's Manual, 2002

Ref JA 86 .S39 2002

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2001

Ref BF76.7 .P83 2001

Official APA "style guide."

Writing in Political Science: A Practical Guide, 2000

Ref JA 86.S36 2000

Key Indexes for Finding Empirical Political Science Articles

>> *Access databases* through *Wallace Library Electronic Resources page*:

<http://www.wheatoncollege.edu/library/resources/electronic> >> choose A-Z or OVID link >> specific index.

PAIS International, 1972-

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

PsycINFO, 1984-

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-

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

Wilson Social Sciences Abstracts, 1984-

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

TIPS FOR KEY INDEXES:

- In PsychINFO and SocioFile, keep Map Term to Subject Heading box checked while doing a keyword search. Subject Headings associated with your search terms will be listed and you can choose among them.
- When you find a relevant record, “harvest” its subject headings. Clicking on the subject headings will bring up all records categorized under that subject. (You may want to further refine this set or combine it with others.)
- *Truncate* with a \$: *politic\$* finds *politics, political, politician, politicians, etc.*
- You can combine your search sets with *Boolean Operators* on the Main Search Page. Refer to sets by number.
Example: 1 AND 2
- Ovid databases treat 2+ words typed into the search box as a phrase. Use Boolean Operators to combine words if this is not your intent.
- Use Limit Screen to limit by language, to peer-reviewed publications, to empirical studies, to book reviews, etc. Each of the Key Indexes offers its own variety of limits.
- Use *Check Library Catalog* links to see whether Wallace Library holds the journal/issue you need.
- To order an item via Interlibrary Loan, mark desired item(s), click on *Citation Manager*, choose *Complete Record*, and click *Order*. Complete the form.

Additional Indexes

These indexes don't tend to contain empirical political science articles, but you may need to use them for book reviews, background, even fodder for analysis (ex: news coverage in *LexisNexis Academic* or TV ads in *Policy Central*).
Access these from the Electronic Resources web page (main page or A-Z list; see above) unless otherwise noted.

America: History & Life, 1964-

American & Canadian history. Indexes and abstracts journal articles, book reviews and Ph.D. dissertations.

Book Review Digest, 1906-

Book Review Index, 1965-1979, 1982-

In print: shelved on Reference Index Table

All subjects. Indexes book reviews published in newspapers, magazines and scholarly journals. **BRD** includes abstracts.

Additional Indexes (cont'd)

Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO), 1991-

International Affairs. Indexes working papers from university research institutes/non-governmental organizations; foundation-funded research, proceedings from conferences, books, journal abstracts, and policy briefs. Much full-text.

EconLit, 1969-

Economics. Indexes and abstracts journals, books and working papers, and Ph.D. dissertations.

GPOAccess: Catalog of US Government Publications, 1994-

US Government publications. [For coverage 1976-1993, use *GPO Monthly Catalog*]

Historical Abstracts, 1955-

World history (with exception of American & Canadian). Indexes journal articles, book reviews and dissertations.

InfoTrac, Expanded Academic Index ASAP, 1980-

All subjects. Indexes articles, much included in full-text. Both peer-reviewed and popular materials.

International Bibliography of Political Science, 1962-

In print: shelved on Reference Index Table

Political Science & International Relations. Annual index of international publications.

LexisNexis Academic, 1980s-

News, law, public opinion. Full-text news stories. Also: law reviews, codes and cases; Roper polls (in *Reference*); radio & TV transcripts (in *News*). You can even search for editorials—see the *How Do I* link at the top for this and other neat tricks.

LexisNexis Congressional (dates vary)

Full-text access to publications from and about the **US Congress**, including congressional working papers, bills (1989-), and testimony (1988-); committee reports (1990-); member biographical and committee assignment information; voting records (1988-); member and campaign financial data and disclosures; plus the *Federal Register* (1980-), the *Code of Federal Regulations* (current), the *U.S. Code, CIS Indexing and Abstracts* (1970-), and the *Congressional Record* (1985-).

National Journal Group's Policy Central (mostly late 1990s to current)

Politics, public opinion. A smorgasbord for the political junkie. Includes *Ad Spotlight* (archive of political ads); *Almanac of American Politics* (analysis & data on every Congress member, their states & districts); *Congress Daily*, *Hotline*, *National Journal* (political news); *Markup Reports* (for status of legislation); *Poll Track*; *Technology Daily* (information technology news).

Women's Resources International, 1972-

Women's Studies. Indexes articles and books.

Ordering Materials Not at Wheaton via Interlibrary Loan (ILL)

Many databases allow you to submit orders for books or articles via Interlibrary Loan straight from the database. Most Ovid and FirstSearch databases have this capability.

- For *Ovid databases*, mark desired records, click on *Citation Manager*, choose *Complete Record*, and click *Order*. Be sure to check to see whether Wallace Library owns it first (click on *Check Catalog Holdings* link to check ELIZA for the journal or book title).
- For *FirstSearch databases*, click on ILL icon when viewing an individual record.
- Use *WorldCat* to find and order books on your topic held by libraries around the world.
- Association papers indexed in SocioFile have not been published. You may contact the author to request a copy.
- For other items, complete an Interlibrary Loan form: <http://www.wheatoncollege.edu/library/services/forms.html>

Always check ELIZA to find out whether we own the item before ordering!

Web Sources

NOTE: Search engines are **not** a good way to find published scholarly articles you need for your lit review. Instead, use web sources to supplement your review.

Some possibilities: Can you find recent conference presentations on your topic online? Have researchers posted relevant “working papers” (papers in a pre-publication state)? Can you find the homepages of the top researchers in the field? Are there email discussion lists relevant to your topic?

General Search Engines

Google <http://www.google.com>
All the Web <http://www.alltheweb.com>

... are currently the biggest general search engines. If you are not using them already, you should be. Both index a variety of media and have helpful advanced options for finetuning your search.

Web Directories (Organized Lists of Links)

InfoMine
<http://infomine.ucr.edu>

Giant directory of scholarly Internet sources in all subjects. Spearheaded by the libraries at the U. of California. Use *Advanced Search* and select “Free Resources” from the *Access* pulldown menu to avoid UC-only subscription databases.

Librarians' Index to the Internet
<http://www.lii.org>

Directory of high-quality Internet sources. From the California public library system.

Social Science Information Gateway (SOSIG)
<http://sosig.esrc.bris.ac.uk>

Say “sausage.” From the Institute for Learning and Research Technology at the University of Bristol, UK. Searchable.

University of Michigan, Government Documents Center: Political Science
<http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/polisci.html>

Great, information-rich site by Grace York, librarian at University of Michigan.

Individual Web Sites

Associations on the Net from the Internet Public Library
<http://www.ipl.org/div/aon>

FirstGov.Com – US Government’s official portal
<http://www.firstgov.gov>

NIRA's World Directory of Thinktanks
<http://www.nira.go.jp/ice/nwdtt>

Scholarly Societies Project sponsored by the University of Waterloo Library
<http://www.scholarly-societies.org>

Working Paper Sites of Political Science
<http://workingpapers.org>

Questions?

Please don't hesitate to contact Shana Gass, the Political Science librarian: sgass@wheatonma.edu; x3736.

I work mostly M-F, 9-5, but most weeks work one night until 10pm, and occasional Sundays. Contact me to make an appointment or ask a question, or just drop by the Reference Offices (behind the Reference Desk in the Library Atrium).