

**Searching for Topics Using Online Databases
Concordia University
Rincker Memorial Library**

Go to <http://www.cuw.edu>. Click on the Library link on the right side of the screen.

1. Go to Online Databases.
2. Choose Databases by Subject & choose the subject area most fitting with your topic, i.e. Arts & Humanities, General Databases, Business, Health & Life Sciences, Education, Social Sciences
3. Within that subject area, there are databases listed with descriptions. Some are general in nature; some are more subject-specific. Click on the link for the database that is most appropriate for your topic. The databases are sponsored by various vendors so there can be variance in the way the interface looks.

I need to locate peer reviewed research articles on “Acid Rain” that have been published within the last five years. My best bet is to go to “General Databases.” I’m going to begin my search with the database Academic Search Premier. It is a good idea to use the Advanced Search to provide you with the most search capability options.

If there is a thesaurus tool, as in this case with Academic Search Premier, it’s called “Subject Terms”, I recommend utilizing the tool. This is a way to specify the subject heading used in that particular database.

I’m going to look up my topic of “Acid Rain” in Subject Terms. Where it says “Browse for”, enter in your search term. Then I could choose to search the term as Term Begins With, Term Contains, Relevancy Ranked. I have chosen to use Term Begins With.

One reason why it is helpful to use the thesaurus type tool is that there are subject options given:

- Acid Rain
- Acid Rain—Environmental aspects
- Acid Rain—Law & Legislation

For my topic, I’d like to use Acid Rain. Click the box next to the term, then add to the search using “and”, then click Add. The term has now been placed in the Find box and you may proceed by clicking on Search.

Once you have gotten to the results page, the system provides clickable options to Narrow Results by Subject.

The step of Refine Search is important. Some essential limiting factors are choosing the following options to be applied to the results:

- Full Text
- Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals
- Publication Type
- Document Type

With Publication Type, most commonly the choice will be “Periodical.” For the Document Type, the most common choice will be “Article.”

In my search on “Acid Rain”, I ended up with 222 results. In order to make that a more manageable search I chose to add a term to my search. In the Find box, I decided to add the operator “and” followed by “United States”, keeping the term enclosed within quotation marks to have it search the words as a phrase. My results ended up as 64 results.

Once you have your results list, you may click on the hyperlinked title of the article to see the abstract. If you wish to print or e-mail the article, choose one of the options that are offered, namely HTML or PDF Full Text. Note that PDF documents will take more processing time in loading and reading the document for printing.