

Scholarly Research for Dummies, part 1

There's nothing that beats a good PhD from a peer-reviewed journal – research nuts (like us) often become obsessed with finding sources with the best possible credentials. The Scholarly Research for Dummies series of articles is designed to give some tips and pointers to budding researchers to help them get up to speed on basic scholarly research. Part 1 is entitled **Where to Look**.

Google Scholar

For most debate purposes, the single most useful resource is Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com/>). (Scholar is also accessible from the main Google page by clicking More (on the top bar) and then Scholar.) Google Scholar works just like a regular Google search, but searches a massive compilation of academic journals and other scholarly stuff – so you're a lot more likely to find an authoritative-sounding study by Dr. Henry Someone, PhD, than a random rant by an unknown person identified only as "xxarg99".

Google Scholar also does a lot of other cool stuff, some of which will be discussed in upcoming articles in the series. For example, most articles have the date listed in the search result, so you can tell at a glance how recent it is. There are also often little links by search results allowing you to do things like look up similar articles, or see who's cited it. By clicking the small link "Advanced Scholar Search" next to the search box, you can do nifty things like limit search results by date (so you don't have to waste time wading through stuff from 1974.)

Here's the catch: A lot of the articles Scholar finds aren't freely available without a subscription. You can usually read the abstract (summary) but the whole article is often not available. Fortunately, articles Scholar has located that are freely available will be marked clearly with a green triangle (either on the main entry or on an alternate link.) You can usually find some good stuff by just scanning through the results and looking at everything that's marked this way.

If you find something that's too good to pass up, however, there are often ways to get the full text through other sources. We'll be covering that in an upcoming article in the series, but for now, you can always try looking in some other academic databases, covered below.

Other Academic Databases

Google Scholar is good, but for extra depth, there are many other databases available. Listed below are several good resources. (Most of the articles you find on these will be freely available.) It's also useful to remember that you can often get access to very useful, subscription-only databases free through your local public library. Often, these databases are accessible remotely with a valid library card number. This can be an invaluable resource, so if you haven't investigated your library's resources, make sure you do so.

JURN (<http://jurn.org/>)

OpenJ-Gate (<http://www.openj-gate.org/Search/QuickSearch.aspx>)

DOAJ (<http://www.doaj.org/doaj?func=searchArticles>) (Directory of Open Access Journals)

BASE (<http://www.base-search.net/>) (Bielefeld Academic Search Engine)

RePEc IDEAS (<http://ideas.repec.org/>) (mostly economics)

SSRN E-Library (<http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/DisplayAbstractSearch.cfm>) (Social Science Research Network)

NEBR (<http://www.nber.org/>) (National Bureau of Economic Research)

arXiv (<http://arxiv.org/>) (mostly physics, statistics, etc.)

If you have any other academic databases you find useful, please leave a comment!

This entry was posted on Wednesday, July 22nd, 2009 at 12:06 pm and is filed under Articles. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.

2 Responses to *Scholarly Research for Dummies, part 1*

In the COG « Jurn blog says:

July 23, 2009 at 4:50 pm

[...] July 2009 in JURN blogged Jurn blogged by the COG 2009 blog. [...]

Reply

Scholarly Research for Dummies, part 2 « COG 2009 says:

July 24, 2009 at 1:32 pm

[...] Scholarly Research for Dummies, part 2 (Reading this out of order? See part 1.) [...]

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