

Databases 101:

Understanding, finding, & using a valuable resource

Questions or Comments?

Find your librarian at
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Objectives

- 1 Define the term database and describe its structure.
- 2 Learn how to access the MUHS databases.
- 3 Learn the basics of database searching.
- 4 Become familiar with some of the standard database features.

What Databases Are

As a student at MUHS, you have **electronic access** to thousands of magazines and journals in addition to our physical collection of books. These are available to you through **databases** paid for with your tuition money.

Definition:

Database (n.): An organized collection of information in some form, usually magazine or journal articles, statistics, etc.

Databases are valuable for many reasons, including:

- They provide access to reliable, organized information (quite unlike the Internet!).
- They are easily searchable.
- Most databases include information from magazines and journals spanning several decades and most are kept VERY current.

Finding Them

To access the MUHS databases, start at the MUHS homepage.

- Go to <http://www.muhs.edu>
- Click on Academics / Doerr Library / Research Portal
- You'll find our databases listed by general topic or you can click on the "Search Databases A to Z" link and search for by database by name.

Off-Campus Access

You can also access these databases from any computer with Internet access. When accessing them from off-campus, you will be asked for a username and password. These can be found on the blue bookmark located at the Library's Information Desk or online from the Student Portal.

Talking to Computers

Computers do not think; they don't understand the context for information you need, or the subtle nuances of human language and thought. Computers are literal -- they process commands based on the keystrokes you make. In the same way, databases retrieve search results based on the words that you enter.

Definitions:

Keyword Searching: Keyword searching allows a user to construct a search by looking for a word or combination of words from the author, title, or subject fields.

Boolean Operators: The words we use to explain to a database how we want our keywords to relate to each other. Among them are AND, OR, and NOT.

AND: Limits a search.

Example: advertising AND teenagers in the search box will only return records that contain both terms.



OR: Expands a search.

Example: college students OR teenagers retrieves all records that contain one term, the other, or both.



NOT: Limits a search

Example: advertising NOT Internet will retrieve all articles about advertising that don't mention the Internet.



Advanced Search Strategies

Quotation Marks

Using quotation marks indicated you want an exact phrase search.

"Star Spangled Banner"

Truncation (* most common symbol)

Truncation retrieves variations on the ending of a root word.

Child* will yield child, children, childhood, childish, childbirth, etc.

AND

OR

NOT

AND

OR

NOT