

Finding Articles for PD100 Executive Summaries

Introduction

This video will help you find and evaluate articles for your Executive Summary assignment.

I'll show you how to search, sort through articles quickly, and improve your searches to find what you need more efficiently.

Focusing Your Topic

Before you start searching, you'll need to have a good, focused topic. Make sure your topic is narrow and specific. If it's too broad, you'll find too many issues to summarize easily for your Executive Summary. For example, instead of searching for intelligence-led policing, think of focusing on one aspect or example of that topic, like its effects on crime reduction.

Before you search, think about the main concepts in your topic to use as search words. If our topic is the effect of intelligence-led policing on crime, the concepts will be intelligence-led, policing, and crime. Try to think of other words people might use to talk about your concepts, like policing or police or law enforcement. Your results depend on the words you use, so you might need to try different terms.

Where & How to Find Articles

Now let's look at where and how to look for articles.

The library catalogue, Omni, is a good place to start since it has scholarly articles on a wide range of topics. You can find the Omni search box in the middle of the library web page, at library.wlu.ca. I'll search for intelligence led policing.

You'll see options for refining your results on the left of the search results. The most important one is Peer-reviewed. Click on that every time you do a search to make sure you are only looking at scholarly or peer-reviewed articles.

To see the actual article, click on the record. You'll see a list of links to the article. Any of them will take you to the article page. Here you can locate the article PDF and print or download it. Log in when asked to using the same network login as MyLearningSpace.

Sometimes you won't find what you need in Omni. When that happens, you can use one of our subject databases instead. These are specialized in one specific subject area, and have lots more articles in that area than Omni does.

You can find them by clicking on the Services menu in the top navigation bar, then choosing Subject Guides. For this class, choose Policing and Public Safety from the list of subjects.

You'll see two main databases at the top of the page. Either one is a good choice for many of the topics you'll be studying in this course. Each has slightly different content, so try and see which works best for you.

I'll pick the first one, Policing @ Ebscohost. It looks a bit different than Omni does, but works the same. Type your search words into the search boxes. It's best to put different concepts on different lines.

There are the same options to refine your results as in Omni, including one to limit to scholarly or peer-reviewed articles.

To locate the actual articles, click on the Get It @ Laurier button. You'll see a list of places the article is available, and can choose any of them to go to the article page with the pdf.

Evaluating Articles Quickly

All our searches found lots of articles. How do you go through them all efficiently without having to read them before discovering they aren't useful for you?

The best way to evaluate articles quickly is to use the abstract. Every scholarly article has an abstract, which is a short summary of the content of the article.

You can find these in Omni by clicking on the article record. Scroll down to see a description of the article that you can use to see how useful it is for you.

In Ebscohost, click on the magnifying glass icon next to an article in your search results. A window pops up, and you can scroll to see the Abstract of the article here.

If the search databases don't give you the abstract, you can find it in the article. Scholarly articles always start with the abstract right at the beginning.

Using abstracts as an evaluation tool can save you a lot of reading time.

Strategies for Fixing Search Problems

Often you'll find that your results are not really on the topic you want, or there are too few of them, or there are way too many. There are some strategies that help with all these problems.

Often it comes down to the words you've used in your search. In my intelligence led policing and crime search, some results looked good but lots didn't.

Here are a few things you can do.

The first is to scroll through the results you get and pay close attention to any that look good. Make sure you take note of the words they use in the title or in the description. People writing about your topic may use different words than you used, and revising your search to use those words can give you better results.

The other thing you can do is to look at the Subjects in the left menu. In Omni, click on Subject to see a list of them. Subjects are words used to describe the main content of each article. Click to select one or more subjects on the list to limit your results only to articles with those subjects.

Here, I decide to select Organized Crime. Now I only see a subset of my initial results, and nearly all of them are on organized crime. This is a good way to focus your topic and make your results more manageable.

More Help

Those are some tips for finding articles for your assignment. If you need help or have questions, you can contact the Library at library.wlu.ca/help/askus.