GESC399: Finding scholarly sources for your literature review

Hello students in GESC 399.

My name is Peter and I'm the Geography Librarian at the Laurier library.

In this video I'll talk about how to find the latest and most relevant scholarly articles for your literature review.

Now for the lit review you're going to need to quickly become knowledgeable on various aspects of your research topic.

Some topics or aspects you may know very little about.

And what I hope to do in this video is show you how to best use our research databases to number one find articles that get you up to speed on research and techniques that experts have used when conducting research in a similar area and two, find articles that give you a more in-depth understanding of a particular research area.

I'll also illustrate that, using examples of research topics that previous 399 field camps have studied. For the first example I'll use. the topic of dendrochronology.

Here's the topic as it appeared in a previous course outline…Note the definition.

Given here of dendrochronology…tree ring dating might also be used in our search as an alternate term…

We also see some additional aspects of the topic that we might want to do separate searches for such as environmental or climate changes, and perhaps other aspects of this technique such as forest fires or flooding.

Now I'm going to assume for the purposes of this video, that if you had this topic you would want to do a literature review on the latest research in the field of dendrochronology.

Let's go to our database.

I'm going to start in the web of science database.

Web of science is a very comprehensive database of peer reviewed journal articles.

I'll do a simple search on dendrochronology.

And I'll change the dropdown at left from all fields to topic note a topic search searches in the article title abstract author keywords and what web of science calls the keywords plus, but it's not searching all the fields that are available to search.

So this gives us a more refined set of precise results.

When we run this search we retrieve well over 3000 results.

Now one of the great things about web of science for your purposes is that you can refine your results immediately to display the review articles in a set.

Review articles are not reports of original research themselves but are instead reviews of research in a particular field and are published in peer review journals.

We can do that by clicking the review article filter on the left and then refine.

As we refine our results we see 93 articles now being retrieved.

That's still a lot.

So another thing you might want to do to limit your results is select those that are published within the last five years.

You can do that in the facet at the left-hand side under publication years.

Then click refine.

So now we have 28 results that are review articles for our topic and we can scroll through these results.

And as we look down the list we note this article new frontiers in tree ring research and we can see in the description that this is a literature review and it discusses case studies at the cutting edge of interdisciplinary tree research tree ring research.

This is exactly the kind of article that might be helpful to you.

Now you might find that these articles are a little bit broad for your topic.

So here's a second suggestion for you. We'll go to the top and we can go to our results.

And maybe if we click on the search we'll be back to our original search screen and I'll add in a row and then maybe add some additional search terms like climate or environment.

And we can look for those terms in the topic areas.

And then we can add a row and perhaps put in change because we're interested in climate change or environmental change.

And we'll search for that term in all the fields.

Now we're getting a lot of results over 1200 but we're getting fewer review articles, just 45.

We could further narrow our results by clicking on our search at the top next to the eyeglass.

And then we might want to add in another field for a geography.

So we could say... And actually I'll look for this term in all the fields.

We could say Ontario…and now we're getting 25 results.

This is a much more workable set of results.

And, you may be able to get some good information on recent work done in this area by downloading an article that looks somewhat relevant and examining the introduction section, or the literature review section if your article has one.

You can also experiment with different aspects of your topic.

So, maybe you're not interested in climate change, or you might also be interested in fires or burn frequency which are two terms that are used in your writeup example in your assignment examples.

So we could use those.

And again we could limit to just review articles to see what recent research has been done on dendrochronology.

And burn frequency of forests for example.

Or, you could look at the articles in general…and we could again add in…Ontario as a geographical term…

And see what kind of research has been done on that aspect of dendrochronology.

There are a few additional things I'd like to mention about web of science very briefly.

First. You've seen how web of science can limit results to various document types.

If you want to ensure you're retrieving only peer reviewed articles, always click the articles box as we saw before.

Also remember to break your search down into individual related terms and enter those terms in the separate search boxes as I've been doing here.

You don't want to enter questions into the search box in any of our research databases.

That will just confuse the search and you'll get very few, and sometimes, no results at all.

Lastly at the time of this video's creation, we had some issues pop up because we recently refreshed our library's website and this caused some buttons not to be displayed in the results screen.

These are the buttons that say Get it! @ Laurier.

In this video, you'll see blank boxes where the buttons would appear.

That issue has been resolved as of the beginning of classes. (September, 2022)

So it shouldn't be an issue for you when you search.

If you have any questions please contact me via my email listed here (pgenzinger@wlu.ca) and on the course guide.

Feel free to book an appointment with me directly.
https://petergenzinger.appointlet.com/

A link to that is also available on the course guide.