Using the ProQuest databases
Information Skills Practical Workshop

This worksheet will give you a taster of the information available to you via the bibliographic databases available through ProQuest. Literature searching from the website of any database is more powerful than searching via the Primo tool or with Google Scholar.

Please ask for help at any time if you need it

1: Plan your search

What are you looking for information on? What is the title of your assignment?

Use the **Search Strategy** planning grid included in your pack to help you to decide on the keyword search approach you will use in this database. Remember to apply the search rules for ProQuest.

Search rules for ProQuest:

- Boolean operators: **AND, OR, NOT** (in capital letters)
- Exact phrase in quotation marks e.g. **"oil production"**
- Truncation symbol ***** e.g. **comput*** will find compute, computer, computers, computation, computing
- Truncation symbol * e.g. ***old** will find told, household, bold
- Truncation symbol * e.g. **colo*r** will find color, colour
- Wildcard symbol ? e.g. **sm?th** will find smith, smyth

2: Carry out your initial search in ProQuest

1. Go to **http://search.proquest.com** (Note there is no www section in the url)

2. Click on the image of the subject area of your choice

3. Scroll down and click on the **Search** link beside the database you want to search

4. Click on the **Advanced Search link** (above the basic search box)

5. Let's try a "quick and dirty" search using only one of your words/phrases for each of your ideas. Don't use any truncation symbols at this point – you will use them later to see if they make a difference!

   Type one keyword or phrase for your first concept (idea) in the first search box

   Type one keyword or phrase for your second concept (idea) in the second search box

4. Click on **Search**

5. Look at the results. How many records have been found? _____

6. Now improve your search – go back and look at the search terms you thought about on your planning sheet/matrix. Use more of your alternative words/phrases for each idea and make sure that you apply the truncation symbol at appropriate points.

7. Click on **Search**

8. Look at the results. How many records have been found?

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You will use a combination of the options presented in Section 3 (View and evaluate your results) and Section 4 (Refine your search) to improve the records that you find.

3: View and evaluate your results

You never get the perfect search first time and you will modify and refine your search as you go along. This involves looking at what you have found and modifying, refining and improving your search strategy.

1. **Viewing your results**: there are a number of options available to you

   a) Hover your cursor over **Preview** to view the abstract

   b) Click on the blue title link for any of the papers. Skim down the information given in this display. Are there any other keywords that you could use to improve your search? If there are note them down as you may want to use them at a later stage of your search.

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   c) Click on blue title link, and then the **SFX** button to find out if we have access to the full text of this article. In the SFX pop-up window select one of the given suppliers. (Make Elsevier your first choice if this is provided, and if Swetswise is an option make this your last choice supplier – you will end up in the same place but takes a few extra clicks to get there).

   d) Identify a reference where there is **no online full text available** in the SFX window. Use the **Go** link to move through to the library catalogue to check our paper holdings for the journal in which this paper was published. Do we have the reference that you were interested in?

2. **Displaying/sorting your results**: the default setting in the **Sort results by** box (above your results list to the right hand side) is the most relevant item at the top of your results list based on where your search terms appear within the reference. You can change this sort order to assist your evaluation of what you have found.

   a) Change the **Sort results by** option to **Date (most recent first)**: this sorts the results list with the most recent item at the top of the list and the oldest item at the bottom – useful if currency is important.

   b) Change the **Sort results by** option to **Date (oldest first)**: this sorts the list with the oldest item at the top of the list and the most recent item at the bottom – useful for researching background and trends.

3. **Evaluating your results**: this depends on your own knowledge of the topic. Skim read the results and abstracts as appropriate. Look for: relevant words in the title and in the abstract; recognised/known authors or institutions. Consider the references used and the number of times a paper has been cited since publication (does not apply if it is a recent paper!). Think about whether the journal in which the paper was published is an important one in this subject area.

4: Refine your search

You never get the perfect search first time. You have to modify and refine as you go along. There are different ways in which you can do this. The following options are available and you will use a combination of these as you evaluate your results and develop your search strategy to identify relevant papers.

1. Refining by **keyword**: At the bottom of the results page you can add another set of keywords to the **Search within results** box – e.g. a third idea/concept.

   In the **Search within results** box add another keyword(s). Click on **Search**. How many records are found?

You can continue to use this option to add more and more ideas. It carries out an automatic **and** search against the previous set of results.

2. Refining by **Subject**: To the right of your results list in a table called **Narrow results by** ProQuest presents additional options for refining and limiting your search.

   Click on **Subject** to open a pop-up list of relevant subjects to your search. Select one or more of the subjects (click on the Include or Exclude check box to the left hand side of the subject), then click on the **Apply** button at the bottom of this section.

3. Refining by **Document Type**: To the right of your results list in a table called **Narrow results by** ProQuest presents additional options for refining and limiting your search.

   Click on **Document Type** to open a pop-up list of document types contained in your results. Put a tick against 1 particular type of document and click on **Apply.** How many records are found?

4. Refining by other means: in the default setting of the **Narrow results by** listing ProQuest allows you to refine/limit your results by a variety of means including **Publication Title** (name of the journal in which papers were published), **Date** (year of publication), and **Language**.

   Do any of these options provide you with useful results?

5: Output your results

Almost all databases allow you to mark and output results in a variety of ways.

1. **Selecting/marking results**:
   a) you can select small numbers of individual records by clicking in the check box to the left of each record
   b) to select a greater number of references use the **Select 1-20** check box in the blue navigation bar above the list of results. 1-20 is the default number of results per page, but may be changed at the bottom of the page

2. Once records have been selected click on any of the options provided in the blue navigation bar above your results: Email, Print, Cite, Export, Save as file, Save to My Research

6: Advanced features

Many databases allow you to set up time saving features such as personal profiles (or accounts), saved search strategies or results lists and alerting features.

To create a personal account in ProQuest follow these steps:

1. Go to **http://search.proquest.com** (Note there is no www section in the url)

2. Click on **My Research** in the top right-hand corner of the screen

3. Click on **Create a My Research account.** Complete the form and click on the **Create Account** button

4. You've now set up your own personal account in ProQuest, and can save search strategies and results lists, set up alerts and manage your settings

7: Off campus access

Setting the proxy on your own computer (instructions on how to set the proxy at **www.abdn.ac.uk/proxy**) is the preferable route for accessing ProQuest, but if you do not have the proxy set, log in to ProQuest using the following steps:

1. Go to **http://search.proquest.com**

2. Under **To login using your institution's login credentials, select a region or group** click on the drop-down menu and select **UK Access Management Federation**

3. Scroll down the list on the right-hand side and click on **University of Aberdeen**

4. A security window will open. Enter your university username and password and click on **Login**

8: Help and advice

If you have any problems with accessing ProQuest or using any of the features, please contact Susan, Elaine or Janet below, or the Service Desk. Information Consultants can also help with any difficulties you encounter with subject specific topics.

IT technical problems, including access to databases: Service Desk

Email: servicedesk@abdn.ac.uk (only staffed Monday to Friday 09:00 – 17:00 hours)

Tel.: 01224 27-3636 (out of hours - after 17:00 on weekdays and at weekends)

Advice and support on using databases:

Arts and Humanities – Janet MacKay (j.i.mackay@abdn.ac.uk)

Education, Social Sciences, Music – Claire Molloy (c.a.l.molloy@abdn.ac.uk)

Law and Business Studies – Elaine Shallcross (e.shallcross@abdn.ac.uk)

Medicine and Medical Sciences – Mel Bickerton (m.bickerton@abdn.ac.uk)

Science and Engineering – Susan McCourt (s.mccourt@abdn.ac.uk)

All workshop materials are available at: **http://aberdeenunilibskills.pbworks.com**

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