How to Find Sources for Your Literature Review

For many information communities, you may find the peer-reviewed articles you need in databases from a variety of disciplines, so OneSearch is a good place to start because it lets you look across all of the library's databases with a single search.
Your first step is to brainstorm your search terms. I’ve chosen medical patients as my information community.

English is a wonderful language and it gives you many ways to say the same thing, which can be maddening when you’re doing research.

For “medical,” I thought of “health” as another possible search term. For “patients”, I chose users or consumers.

Also, either information or education could be ways to get information on my group’s search behavior. So spend some time with your topic thinking of different ways to express what you’re looking for.
Brainstorm Search Terms

- Information seeking behavior
- Information searching
- Information seeking
- Help seeking
- Search behavior
- Searching behavior

What your information community is doing can also be expressed in several different ways. So play around with different combinations to see what might be out there.
And one last thing before we jump into OneSearch, some tips for constructing your search.

If you want to search on a phrase, such as “consumer health”, be sure to put it in quotes.

In the databases, AND, OR and NOT are the three ways you can join your search terms together. You can do the same in OneSearch, just be sure you capitalize them.

- **Decrease** the number of your results by combining terms with **AND**, which makes your search more specific.

- **Increase** the number of your results by inserting **OR** between them. This tells OneSearch to find either term.

- To remove a term from your results, put **NOT** in front of the phrase. So in the example above, all of my results will mention “consumer health” and anything mentioning “patient education” won’t be included.
So you have your terms and you’ve entered your search. Before looking at your results, be sure to sign-in to your library account with your student ID and SJSUOne password. You will see the sign-in option above your list of results.

Signing in allows you to

- Request library items not available at SJSU
- Access licensed resources only available to current students and faculty
- Add items and queries to your My Lists for later use
- Set up an alert that will automatically send you an email when OneSearch locates new items based on your search criteria.

You can learn more about these features in the OneSearch guide:

https://libguides.sjsu.edu/onesearch-online
Now it is time to look at your results. The first thing to know is that not everything in OneSearch is scholarly. Your results will include newspaper articles, trade journal articles, conference proceedings, and books as well as peer-reviewed articles.

The majority of your resources for this assignment should be peer-reviewed so use the “Refine by” column to the left of your results to make your search more specific.

Clicking the Peer-reviewed journals filter limits your results to only scholarly, peer-reviewed journals.

Clicking the Articles filter further limits your results to only articles.
You can go directly to an article by clicking the “Full text available” link.

Sometimes, the library will not have access to an article online and you will see “No full-text” instead.

Don’t worry! You can still request this article using Interlibrary Loan. When you click the article title, the record will open and you will see this free option available.

Clicking the link will automatically fill in the Interlibrary Loan request form, and the article will be sent as a PDF to your Interlibrary Loan account in 1-3 days.
Here is a typical database record for an article. San Jose State has over 400 databases, so your results may vary. However, most databases provide these options.

1. A **PDF Full Text** link to the full article. Clicking here will open the article so you can read it. Sometimes this link will say **HTML Full Text**. This is also the full article but without any formatting or page numbers.

2. The second is this list of **Subject Terms**. You have probably learned that databases use something called a "controlled vocabulary." They index their articles using very specific terms and sometimes they are terms that you wouldn’t think of. So when you find one article you like, explore its subject terms to find more. Also, these are live links, clicking on them takes you to all of the articles on that subject in that database.
Over to the right of the database record, you’ll often see a list of icons.

**Add to Folder** allows you to save several articles together than export, print or save them to your computer at one time.

**Print** allows you to print.

**Email** allows you to email the article information to yourself and provides a link back to that article or a PDF of the article itself, depending on the database.

**Save** allows you to save not the article but the article record and a link to get back to the article. (You can save the article itself by first opening it then choosing the Save option you’ll see then.)

**Cite** will give you a pop-up window and give you the reference for this article in several different citation methods, including APA, so you can just cut and paste. **Always double-check these.** They are only as good as the publisher’s data.

**Export** allows you to send the citation information on this article to RefWorks.

If you have created an account in this database, you can add **Notes** to an article.

**Permalink** provides the URL to this particular article. The URL you see in your address bar when you’re in a database is called a **session URL** and won’t work if you copy it and save it. The permalink however is a stable URL that will always take you back to this article.

And **Share** allows you to share this article on a variety of social media sites.

Many databases provide all or some of these options and they will appear in different places within your results, so look around in order to find them.
Know that finding one solid article on your subject can lead you to a lot more. I call this “snowballing”. Check the References section of the one article you found. This is a list of the articles the author read before writing her own article, and these articles will be on the same subject. You can use these citations to find more on your topic.
Also make use of the **database thesaurus**. Most databases will have one. Sometimes it will say Thesaurus; sometimes it will say Subject Terms.

Subject terms can also be called descriptors, controlled vocabulary, and sometimes classification terms. Use these terms to make your search more focused and also to find other ways to express what you are looking for.
Enter your search term in the Thesaurus, and it will show you what that database uses instead. In this example, I searched on the term "search behavior" and was told to use the term "searching behavior" instead. You’ll notice that "searching behavior is a live link. When I click on it, I got a broader term for what I was looking for. Often, the thesaurus will give you narrower terms as well.

Using the thesaurus allows you to speak the database’s language and helps you create more effective searches. It is also a good tool for brainstorming additional search terms.
I mentioned that not all articles you find using OneSearch are necessarily scholarly. OneSearch will indicate if an article is classified as peer-reviewed, but if you want to double-check something you find online, use the database called Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory.

In Ulrich’s, search on the journal title (not the article title). If the journal is marked as refereed (another term for peer-reviewed), your article has been through the peer review process.
Now let’s move on to some of the sources I have gathered on the INFO 200 page of my Library and Information Science LibGuide. ([http://libguides.sjsu.edu/lis/INFO200](http://libguides.sjsu.edu/lis/INFO200)).

Above is a search from ARBA Online, which provides listings of important reference sources. You can search by keyword or subject. Your search will give you a list of online resources and print resources.

**Professional organizations** like the American Cancer Society can be an excellent source for research and publications, so don’t forget to take advantage of these. What they publish, if not peer reviewed itself, can often have bibliographies that can lead you to peer-reviewed resources.

Also on the INFO 200 page, you’ll see **Sources for Background Information**. These are subject-specific encyclopedias with articles written and reviewed by experts in the field, so they are an excellent source of authoritative resources. The Pew Research Center is also a very reliable source. It does research on a variety of populations and you can search its site for research on your specific topic.
Remember, too, to benefit from the work of librarians who have gone before you. One way to do this is to search the American Library Association site for research guides. In OneSearch, “site:” will allow you to search a single site for your search terms. In the search you see here, I’m searching ala.org for the phrase “consumer health”.

This search found over 700 possibilities. This won’t hold true for every topic, of course, but it is worth trying. And there is another search that can have huge results.
Libguides. Enter your topic followed by libguides to see if you can find any library with a research guide on your topic.

This search found quite a few LibGuides on the topic of consumer health. Within these guides, I might be able to discover scholarly sources for my subject area that are available at the King Library as well.
Last but very much not least: be sure to search the library catalog for books on your subject. Try the same search terms you found useful in the databases and use the “Refine by” options to go from there. To restrict your search to ebooks, after searching on your topic, select the Books filter then the Full text online from SJSU filter. Ebooks will have an “Online access” link that will open the book in your browser.

Just like articles, mine the books’ bibliographies for more resources. You’ll find a lot of ebooks in our collection and remember that Interlibrary Loan can mail print books directly to you.

Good luck! If you get stuck in your research, please don’t hesitate to contact me at ann.agee@sjsu.edu. This is a challenging assignment, and I’m happy to help.