

# Using the EBSCO academic databases

## Information Skills Practical Workshop

This worksheet will take you through the process of carrying out a search in databases hosted on the EBSCO Platform. We recommend that you use the examples provided rather than a specific assignment that you may be working on at the moment. The aim of the workshop is to learn how to use EBSCO – we believe that by following the exercises as given you are less likely to become involved in the intricacies of the results and instead learn about the EBSCO features that you can apply later to your specific subject areas.

**Please ask for help at any time if you need it.**

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### 1. Which databases are available on the EBSCO Platform?

The EBSCO platform currently contains 16 databases across many subject areas. Each database contains information on research published in selected journals and conferences. Some of the databases contain information related to books. Here are the databases currently available from EBSCO.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anthropology Plus</li><li>• Art &amp; Architecture Complete</li><li>• ATLA Religion Database</li><li>• British Education Index</li><li>• Child Development &amp; Adolescent Studies</li><li>• CINAHL</li><li>• Education Abstracts</li><li>• Educational Administration Abstracts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ERIC</li><li>• European Views of the Americas: 1493 to 1750</li><li>• GreenFILE</li><li>• LISTA</li><li>• MLA International Bibliography with Full Text</li><li>• RILM Abstracts of Music Literature</li><li>• SPORTDiscus</li><li>• Teacher Reference Center</li></ul>
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### 2. How to access EBSCO databases

1. Go to Primo – <http://primo.abdn.ac.uk> and sign in at the top right of the screen
2. Select the **Find Databases** tab
3. In the new window that appears enter **EBSCO** in the box called **Database Search** and click on search
4. A list will be created containing the 16 different databases which we currently have access to through the EBSCO Platform
5. Click on any one of the 16 databases to link out to the EBSCO Platform. Primo will open the database's details page. In the **View Online** section click on the name of the database e.g. ERIC (EBSCO). Once on EBSCO you can change the particular database you are actually searching in. If off-campus, you may be asked to sign in via your institution. Select University of Aberdeen and sign in with your username and password.

### 3. Search rules and main features of EBSCO

These are the Search Rules for all of the EBSCO databases:

- **Boolean operators:** AND, OR, NOT, (they are not case sensitive)
- **Exact phrase:** can be in quotation marks e.g. "passive smoking" or not e.g. passive smoking. (This is very unusual!) EBSCO, however, encourages the use of quotation marks
- **Truncation symbol:** \* (to pick up the different endings to words e.g. comput\* to pick up computer, computers, computing, computation). The truncation symbol can be used in an exact phrase search e.g. "passive smok\*"
- **Automatic stemming:** a basic form of automatic stemming is carried out by EBSCO. If you type in the singular form of a word e.g. *image* the search will find both *image* or *images*. We would recommend the correct use of the truncation symbol to ensure that you retrieve all relevant items rather than relying on the stemming feature.

#### Searching on the EBSCO platform

1. If you are not already there, link to EBSCO – see section 2 on page 1 of this worksheet
2. Select the database within EBSCO which you want to use and click on **OK** (use the **Choose Databases** link above the search platform)
3. Enter some search terms into search boxes and click on **Search**
4. Look at the results display
5. Click on the title of a paper to view the record. In the left-hand display panel the column entitled **Find Similar Results** uses EBSCO advanced features which look for other references that are related to the original paper through the thesaurus terms used to describe them. If you were struggling to find relevant papers through keywords this additional facility may be useful.
6. Use the browser **Back** button, then click on **Result List**. Navigate back to your original list of results.
7. Click on **Find It** in one of the entries. This will take you back to Primo and the details page for the item you selected. In the **View Online** section in Primo click on the name of the provider e.g. SAGE. This will take you to the provider's website where you can access the article in full-text.
8. Back to your EBSO results screen, look at some other records. Click on **Find It** to check availability for another paper of interest. If the item is not available online, scroll to the **Get It** section on the item's details page in Primo and check our print holdings for the journal in which this paper was published.
9. To the left of your results in EBSCO, look at the options under **Refine Results**. There are a range of methods available for further refining your set of results. Experiment selecting some of these to see how they operate. The display in this panel is database and result dependent.
10. Use any of the terms provided by the **Subject** option to refine your search in a different way. This refining option uses key terms as identified by the database as being relevant to your subject search.
11. Click on **All Results** in the left-hand panel to return to your original set of results
12. Select 5 references by clicking on the  icon provided to the right of each of the references. This marks and identifies the records as items on which you want to take further action. If you wanted a full page of references, this is done by clicking on the **Share**  icon given at the top of the results display, then selecting  **Results (1-10)** . If you change your preferences so that more results are displayed per page, (through Page Options) then Results 1-10 will read: Results 1-20 or whatever number you selected.
13. Look in the right-hand panel – you now have a section entitled **Folder has items**. Click on **Folder View** to navigate to the items you selected in step 13 above.
14. You are now presented with the contents of your personal **Folder**. The sub-folders within **Folder** allow you to save Articles (which actually means references), Searches and Alerts. Sign in to EBSCO to name and create folders for your own use, using features in the left hand panel.
  - Then within **My Custom** click on **New**
  - Against **Folder name:** type in **test1**

- In Description: type in the following **Created as test during workshop**
- Click on **SAVE**
- In the main panel click on the checkboxes for the items you want to move into the newly created folder. Click on **Move to:** and use the drop-down menu to select the **test1** folder. Records are moved from your Articles folder (in the main display panel) to your named folder **test1**.

15. Click on **Back** to the right of the EBSCO logo,  near the top of the page to navigate back to your results display
16. Click on the blue **Search History** link at the top of the results list to view the searches carried out in this session
17. From this screen you can carry out a range of functions including **Save Searches/Alerts** and retrieving any previously saved searches or alerts. Delete any search steps that are not required and then use the **Save Searches/Alerts** option to save the resultant search strategy. In the Save Search/Alert form that you must complete, use radio buttons to select whether you want to save the search as a **Permanent Search** (you can come in and run it whenever you like), **Temporary Search** (24 hours - why bother?) or as an **Alert**. If you complete the form multiple times, you can save in all of the formats.
18. Click on **Save, Continue** and navigate back to the Advanced Search screen via the blue **Back** located to the right of the large EBSCOHost icon at the top of the page

You have now covered the main features of the EBSCO database. However, there are many other facilities available to you and these are best experienced by exploring the databases that are most relevant to you. Options vary across the databases and you should find out what you can do within the database that is best suited to your subject area.

#### 4. More search features

1. Click on **Choose Databases** link (top of the page near the circular EBSCO logo)
2. Use the tick box to select the database you want to use and then click on **OK**
3. Within your selected database try any or all of the following:
  - Apply your newfound skills and search for information relevant to your research area. Remember to take care with your keywords and apply the search rules correctly
  - Type in your search terms using the EBSCO search rules and refine/limit your search using the given additional search terms
  - Type in your search terms using the EBSCO search rules and refine/limit your search using the options provided in the **Refine Results** panels to the left-hand side of the results list
  - Explore additional search tools provided e.g. **Indexes**. Note - they can be extremely useful if you are building up your expertise and knowledge of terminology within a subject area. They can be found at the very top of the screen on the left-hand side of the blue line across the top.
  - Try a more flexible searching strategy. Build up your searches in individual steps using just the top box on the Basic or Advanced Search screen and then use the **combine** option that is given in the Search History/Alerts link.
  - Try changing your **Preferences**
4. If you have a working RefWorks account you can export records to it for use later
  - Select records by clicking on **Add to folder**
  - Click on the **Folder** icon
  - Use the **Select/deselect all** option, or individually tick records, to select those that you want to transfer into RefWorks
  - Click on **Export**

- You are now in the **Export manager** screen. Leave the checkbox in the left-hand panel unselected. It is good practice as a safety feature in case the Export does not work first time – you can always remove the records later. In the right-hand panel entitled **Save citations to a file formatted for:** select button at the bottom for **Direct Export to RefWorks**.
  - After you have decided whether or not you want these records retained in your folder click on the **Save** button
  - You will then be redirected to RefWorks and asked to log in (select Legacy RefWorks)
5. When you have finished searching in your EBSCO database click on **Sign Out** (top of the screen) to finish

**Please refer to the EBSCO Help screens for more detailed information on any aspect of the EBSCO search features**

## 5. Advanced Features

EBSCO offers a variety of advanced facilities including the ability to:

- Save preferences
- Organise your research with folders
- Share your folders with others
- View others' folders
- Save and retrieve your search history
- Create email alerts and/or RSS feeds
- Gain access to your saved research remotely

To take advantage of the advanced options you must create a personal account – you will only need to do this once. Follow the steps below to create your own personal account on EBSCO.

1. Link to the EBSCO platform following the steps in section 1 of this worksheet
2. Once on the EBSCO platform click on **Sign In** (top of the page). Complete and submit the form.
3. You will now have an account and when you use EBSCO in the future, remember to click on sign in to get access to the advanced features and any folders that you have created.
4. When you have finished using any EBSCO database click on **Sign Out** before moving off to another website or shutting down the PC.

## 6. Help and advice

**Library staff and Information Consultants can help with any difficulties using any library resource**

Information Consultant contact details: <http://bit.ly/InfoConsultants>

**IT staff are able to help with specific IT related problems you may be having**

**IT Service Desk** - Log any IT problems at <https://myit.abdn.ac.uk>

Tel. 01224 273636 (24-hour service available)