

Literature Searching – How to Search Like a Pro

When you search the literature, do you just go to Google Scholar? While that might be fine to do a quick scan or to win an argument in a bar trivia night, if you want to do a serious literature search there are much better, more refined tools out there, and they are worth learning about. This document outlines some of the basics of health and medicine literature searching.

Are you still typing out your references? There's no need to waste time doing that anymore! The latest bibliographic software will store and retrieve any references you need, and create a bibliography with just one key stroke. It's available free through the University. Go to page 5 of this document to learn more, or ask your librarian.

What is a MeSH term?

MeSH terms are labels assigned to medical and health articles in order to describe what the article is about. The National Library of Medicine employees with training as 'indexers' look at each new article published in peer reviewed journals, and assign to it about 10–12 labels which best describe the content of the article.

MeSH terms are official words or phrases selected to represent particular biomedical concepts. When labelling an article, indexers select terms only from the official MeSH list – never other spellings or variations. For instance, an article is never be labelled with the term *heart attack*, because indexers must always use the official MeSH term, ***Myocardial Infarction***

What does “map term to subject heading” mean?

In databases with a controlled vocabulary or thesaurus (like MEDLINE's MeSH -- Medical Subject Headings) -- a checkbox labeled "Map Term to Subject Heading" appears above the Command Line on the Main Search Page. When this is checked, Ovid applies the Mapping process to your search. Mapping attempts to match the word or phrase that you enter on the Command Line to an appropriate Medical Subject Heading (MeSH). The Suggested Terms List that appears shows the MeSH terms which are most likely to retrieve documents on your desired topic.

For example, if you type in "tylenol" the system will map to "acetaminophen" as the obvious correlated MeSH term. Or, if you enter a more general term such as "pregnancy" the Suggested Terms List will be much more comprehensive -- including all of the pregnancy-related MeSH terms.

When using MeSH, be sure to choose the most specific MeSH term(s). For example, if you are searching for "arrhythmia," selecting the "heart diseases" subject heading would not be particularly effective because it's too broad. Try to find the subject heading(s) that best matches your particular topic or concept.

What is a Boolean Search or Phrase?

Boolean search is based on the work of prominent British mathematician George Boole. In a library search, the most important thing to appreciate about Boolean is that there are only five elements of syntax to understand. These are:

AND

OR

NOT

()

""

So you can use: Measles AND vaccine; Measles NOT vaccine; or sometimes you want to do one or the other and use OR.

The brackets can help with a long string of search terms, such as (Measles OR Rubella) AND vaccines

The quotes are for when you have a phrase and you want the search engine to consider the whole phrase, not parts of it. You can even use this in Google. For instance, if you put: Jonathan Creek season 1 episode 5 in google, you get a bunch of returns, only some of which are specifically about season 1 episode 5. But if you put the quote marks around it, the first page of results will only be about that episode.

For off-campus access – what you need to know

Off campus access: go to this page <https://library.usask.ca/use-the-library/printing-and-computers/connect-from-home.php#Howdoesoffcampusaccesswork>

It will tell you how to install the proxy bookmarklet. Then, whenever you are searching off-campus you can get access to whatever the library has even if you're not logged in. This saves you having to copy the title and go back to the University library site, log in, and paste it in.

Google Scholar:

If you search through google scholar, you may hit a paywall. To get around that, update your settings:

1. From [Google Scholar](#), click on the ☰ in the top left corner of the screen and select ⚙️ **Settings** then **Library Links**
2. In the search box on the **Library Links** page search for 'University of Saskatchewan'
3. Make sure all **University of Saskatchewan** checkboxes are selected then **Save**

*Note, this will only work if the article is something in the USask collection.

When you search Google Scholar, if the library has access, you will now see Fulltext@USaskLibrary on the right side of your list of search results. This link will take you to the full text version via your USask library account. These preferences will be saved for all future searches on that computer.

Google scholar is not the best search tool for a lit review, but it's useful when you want to do a broad, interdisciplinary search, when you want to search across many academic sources, or if you have a specific citation and you want to find it quickly.

Specific databases



Go to the Database tab on the main library page, <https://library.usask.ca/>

The Research Guides page can suggest databases for your subject: <https://libguides.usask.ca/?b=s>

For instance, you can click on Nursing and find this helpful set of links, plus the email for the librarian who specializes in Nursing literature: (<https://libguides.usask.ca/nursing>). There is also one for Indigenous and Northern studies, although it is not specifically for health.

Nursing: Home

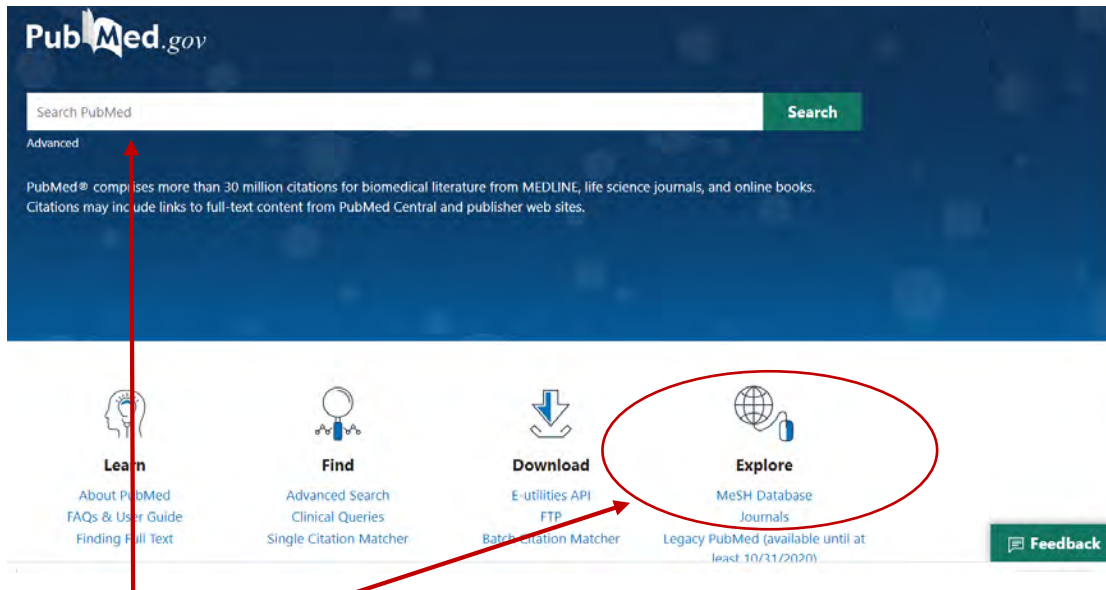
This guide is a resource to help faculty and students identify high-quality nursing resources available for their research and practice

<ul style="list-style-type: none">HomeFind ArticlesFind BooksFind Nursing Study ToolsFind Evidence Based Practice ResourcesFind Practice GuidelinesFind Drug informationFind Mobile AppsFind Ethics InformationFind StatisticsFind Theses & DissertationsFind Images and VideosFind Video TutorialsAPA Citation Style HelpManaging Citations HelpWriting and Research HelpCourse Guides	<h4>Continuity of Library Services</h4> <p>CONTINUITY OF LIBRARY SERVICES GUIDE:</p> <p>This guide will help you locate USask library services and other resources that are available as USask experiences a brief or prolonged closure. Please refer to this helpful Quick Guide to Services for a complete list of services and availability.</p> <p>CONTACTLESS PICKUP AT THE LIBRARY:</p> <p>Contactless Pickup at the library can be arranged for borrowing physical items in our collection. Additionally, portions of items, such as select pages/chapters of books or print articles, can be scanned and delivered via email.</p> <p>CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE COLLEGE OF NURSING:</p> <p>As the dedicated librarian for nursing, you can contact me via email if you need research support and/or training. I am available to meet via WebEx or Skype if you need assistance at this time.</p> <p>- Kevin Read</p>	<h4>Your Nursing Liaison Librarian</h4>  <p>Kevin Read</p> <p>EMAIL ME</p> <p>Contact: Room 1437 Academic Health Sciences Building 104 Clinic Pl. Saskatoon, SK S7N 5E5 (306) 966-1643</p> <p>Subjects:</p>
	<h4>Key Nursing Resources</h4> <p> CINAHL Plus with Full Text: Cumulative Index to</p>	

Some of the databases you may find helpful are:

PubMed

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Simple search, or MeSH search

Research Guides page at the USask Library:

<https://libguides.usask.ca/>

CINAHL – Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature

The College of Nursing page has some excellent short videos on how to search Cinahl. [Go to this link.](#)

Medline - Life Sciences and Biomedicine

APA PsychINFO for psychology, mental health etc.

Public Health

Grey literature – grey literature includes things like government publications, evaluations, pamphlets, and other materials that are not specifically research but may be useful for your topic.

For Community Health and Epidemiology

Go to this page: <https://libguides.usask.ca/communityhealth/greylit> for useful database links

For Public Health:

<https://libguides.usask.ca/publichealth/greylit>

Recording your search

Here's a great blog about how one person uses excel to record her lit search.

<https://alawuntoherself.com/2016/05/20/how-i-use-excel-to-manage-my-literature-review/>

There are many templates available, but the best template is the one you create yourself.

Synthesis Review

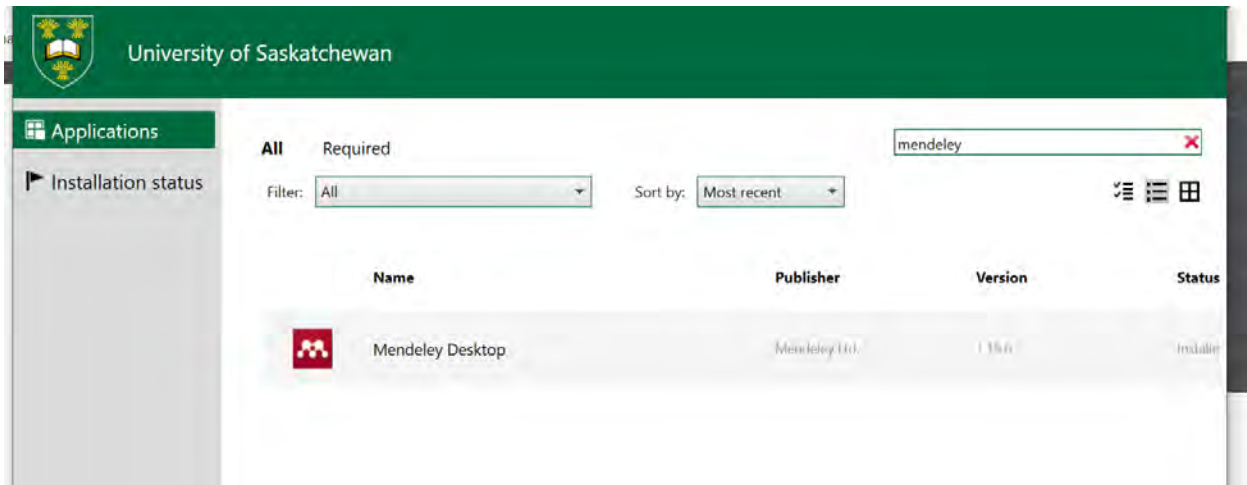
USask has a series of tutorials on how to do a synthesis review:

<https://libguides.usask.ca/synth-review>

A synthesis review includes a whole team of reviewers, but some of the principles from these tutorials are useful for lit reviews done by one person.

Mendeley

There are different types of bibliographic software. Mendeley is a cloud-based software available to all U of S students. You can also use one called Zotero. You can find the download links in the library resources. <https://libguides.usask.ca/c.php?g=16494&p=2550526>



Go to the USask software download site for students and download Mendeley. Once Mendeley is in your computer, you still have to tell it to install a plug in in word, so you can easily insert references and generate a bibliography as you type. Here's how:

Installing the WORD plugin

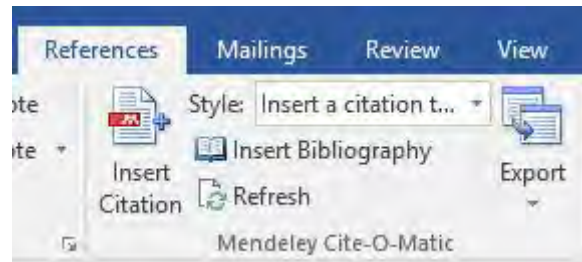
Mendeley comes with a Microsoft Word plugin which allows you to insert citations and bibliographies in to your Word document without having to cut and paste or leave Word.

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To install the plugin Word both Word and Outlook must be closed first. Next open the Mendeley Desktop App. Go to Tools >> Install MS Word Plugin. Then restart Word.



* For Windows users the plugin will appear in the **References** tab of MS Word.



* For Mac users the plugin will appear in the **Add-ins** tab of MS Word.



To put articles into Mendeley, I usually just save them to my computer, then go to Mendeley and save them into that. I do this because I like to know the articles are on my computer just in case, but you may prefer importing directly from your browser right into Mendeley. Here's how:

Installing the Browser Plugin

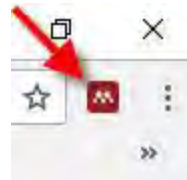
Mendeley also provides a Web Importer tool which allows you to import citations, and sometimes the full text article, directly from your browser in to your library.

To install the plugin from the Mendeley app click Tools >> Install Web Importer.



Depending on which browser you use the importer will be in a different location but regardless of the browser it will function the same.

In Chrome and Firefox the plugin appears in the upper right corner of your browser, while for Safari and Edge users, the Mendeley plugin shows up in the bookmarks or favorites bar.



Example of Chrome Plugin

Browser Security Conflicts

Sometimes there is a conflict with your browser's security settings and the plugin. Follow the steps below to resolve this issue:

Chrome

Click 'Customise' (three black lines on the top right of the screen), and then 'Settings'. Click 'Show Advanced Settings' at the bottom of the page, then click 'Content Settings...' under 'Privacy'. Then, under 'Cookies' click 'Manage exceptions...' and allow mendeley.com, then click 'Done'.

Mozilla Firefox

Click the Menu button at the top right and click 'Options'. Then, under the 'Privacy' tab, either set the 'History' drop down option to 'Use custom settings for history' tick 'Accept Third Party Cookies'. Add www.mendeley.com to the 'Exceptions' box. Click 'Save Changes' to save.

For more information you can have a look at [Mozilla Firefox's page on enabling and disabling cookies](#).

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USask Library lit search videos:

<https://usask.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Sessions/List.aspx#folderID=%22f5c2d11a-b237-4b88-bffe-ac070166bbdc%22>