

# TWO

## Books



### Print publications online

The Internet and the printed word are sometimes discussed as though they were two distinct kinds of information, one of them unreliable and suspect, the other dependable and trustworthy. Over the past few years this distinction has broken down completely and it no longer makes any sense to think of the Internet and the printed word as two opposing categories. After a decade of rapid technological and economic change, the Internet is now the main medium for distributing and accessing articles from academic journals, and it is fast becoming a principal medium for distributing and accessing books. If you're looking for print publications, the best place to start is online.

Although the distinction between what is online and what is in print is breaking down, the concept of print publication continues to be important. Online documents that are also available in print form have generally gone through a set of quality control measures which have developed in the world of print publishing, measures which the bulk of purely online documents do not have to go through. Print publications are much more likely to have gone through a peer review process, whereby people with expertise in the field assess whether they are worth publishing, through an editing process in which authors are encouraged to improve their work, and through copy-editing and proof-reading processes aimed at eliminating errors. These processes are far from flawless and are the subject of much harsh and justified criticism (Harley and Acord, 2011). Print publications can be poorly written, error laden and biased just like web pages, even when they have been through peer review. Decisions on what to publish are often bound up with academic power struggles, fads and fashions and complex

personal networks. The essential point here is that you have to approach any piece of writing with a critical eye, regardless of the source.

Nonetheless, print publications online constitute a distinctive genre of document that is marked out from other online materials that are not subject to the same quality-control processes. They constitute the most clearly organized and quality controlled sector of the online world and they remain the single most important online resource for anyone doing research in the social sciences or the humanities. When you are writing on a research topic, you are expected to address the central debates and the established body of knowledge around this topic in the academic literature. For this reason alone it is important that you start your research with the online services devoted to academic books and articles.

### Order and chaos

In one sense, the world of print online is the best organized and ordered part of the Internet, with texts carefully selected, catalogued, indexed and stored in elaborate databases that allow sophisticated searches. In another sense, it is the most chaotic and confusing part of the Net. These texts have such high commercial value that competing information providers offer multiple routes to overlapping but distinctive databases of these texts. The publishers who own copyright on these publications make deals with a variety of indexing services in order to publicize and sell the materials through as many avenues as possible. Thus a single journal article may be listed in dozens of different databases. To take just one example, articles from *Social History*, a journal located at the intersection between the social sciences and the humanities, are indexed in more than 20 different databases. This is further complicated by the fact that these databases often index journals from different starting points so that one database will cover a journal from 1994 while another will have coverage dating back to 1984. In addition, each database may allow slightly different kinds of search. While there is huge overlap between the databases, it is far from complete and there is no single database you can rely on for comprehensive coverage. It's necessary to search a few if you are trying to make sure you have covered everything in a specialized area. To complicate matters further, you will find that many of the same databases are made available through several different commercial products, all bundling a different selection of databases together to market an all-in-one package.

### Access costs

Most of the material in most of the services dealt with below will only be available to you if your university or library pays the subscription fees. Your institution



will only subscribe to a selection of the services below. Many services will recognize that you are accessing the service from a computer at your home institution and will automatically give you access via their home page if your institution is subscribed. If this is not the case, you need to check on your university or library's web pages for a link to these services.

Two developments are making life easier for those whose institutions are not subscribed to some of these massive and expensive services. In the first place, more and more databases are allowing anyone to conduct searches of the databases free of charge, while limiting access to full text to subscribers. As search services, they are useful in their own right in identifying material. Several of these services, and a range of new services emerging to cater to the needs of individual researchers, allow you to purchase single articles, although the charges for individual academic articles remain very high. In addition, some services are experimenting with other innovative pricing models which cater to the individual researcher, including the option to buy access to the full contents of a database for a set period of time, an hour or two, or a day perhaps.

Alongside this, there has recently been a significant increase in the volume of freely available academic literature and some of the services below are primarily devoted to distributing this free literature. Despite this, the bulk of high-quality academic literature is locked up in these subscription databases and your access will be very much determined by the amount of hard cash your institution is paying to ensure that you get access to these materials. Increasing numbers of students are bypassing these restrictions by downloading scanned academic books from file-sharing sites.

Some professional associations and research institutes collect together syllabi in their subject areas and make them available online. The Syllabi Initiative of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations ([www.shafr.org/teaching/higher-education/syllabi-initiative/](http://www.shafr.org/teaching/higher-education/syllabi-initiative/)), for example, provides dozens of syllabi online. The American Political Science Association has also put together an extensive list of online syllabi on a range of politics topics ([www.apsanet.org/content\\_3807.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/content_3807.cfm)) and a list of other collections of syllabi online, while the Economic History Association has created an extensive EH.net course syllabi collection ([eh.net/coursesyllabi](http://eh.net/coursesyllabi)). The websites of H-Net discussion lists in the humanities and social sciences ([www.h-net.org](http://www.h-net.org)) can be an excellent source of bibliographies and syllabi if there is a list in your subject area.

If a professional association in your subject area has done something similar, it should be your first port of call. Syllabi and reading lists are not as freely available online as they were a few years ago. Many universities that once made materials freely available now use educational software packages that only permit access to students who are registered on the courses. These resources are invisible to



the Internet search engines and closed to the public. On the other hand, several major new services have emerged to provide expanded public access to some of these materials.

*Jorum* ([www.jorum.ac.uk](http://www.jorum.ac.uk)) This is a UK academic service that provides a massive collection of high-quality course materials that have been uploaded by academics teaching in UK universities. It includes extensive reading lists and syllabi and much more besides. Many of the resources are only available if you are based at an educational institution in the UK.

*The Open Course Ware Consortium* ([ocwconsortium.org](http://ocwconsortium.org)) This includes a growing number of universities (mainly in the USA) that provide huge collections of syllabi and other course materials online, including videos of all of the lectures for certain courses. You can do a joint search of materials for over 50,000 courses at the OCW site. You can also search the OCW sites of the individual institutions, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology ([ocw.mit.edu/index.htm](http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm)) and the University of Notre Dame ([ocw.nd.edu](http://ocw.nd.edu)).

## Search strategy

### Identifying key texts through reading lists

The first step in a literature search is to identify some of the key texts in the area, the works that everyone writing on this area has to engage with because their arguments set the terms of the debate. Your supervisor, professor or lecturer should be a good starting point for information on key texts.

Beyond this, you can also get access to lists of key works in the course syllabi and reading lists made available online by hundreds of thousands of other professors and lecturers. Not every syllabus includes a reading list but most of them do. If you find that your research topic is the subject of an entire course, or forms a major component of a course at another university, the syllabus for that course can be extremely useful, not only in providing a specialized list of key works in the area, but also in the short summaries of topics which are often provided. These can give you a flavour of the key debates in the area. If you are teaching a course of your own, the syllabi of others can provoke ideas and provide useful templates for structuring a course. To search for syllabi on the open Web through a search engine like Google or Yahoo it can often be effective to search using the title of the course and the word syllabus, if it is a commonly taught subject that tends to have the same title across institutions and jurisdictions. Thus a search on **syllabus "social geography"** turns up multiple syllabi on the topic in the first ten hits alone. To retrieve syllabi from a particular country limit your search by domain, to **.edu** for US universities or **.ac.uk** for British universities, for example. An alternative is to search for a key text specific to your topic. If you wanted to do research on the

sociology of food, for example, you might do a search on *The Sociology of Food* by Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, a key text on the topic. A search in Google on **Syllabus Otterloo “Sociology of Food”** brings back several relevant results, among them syllabi for courses on the ‘Sociology of Food and Eating’ and ‘Food & Drink in the Ancient Mediterranean’. These syllabi provide a list of topics dealt with and a short list of readings.

Some academic disciplines are organized very differently in different countries and non-US researchers may need to find out what subject headings their area of interest comes under in the USA if they are to locate useful American reading lists.

### Books and articles

Just as the distinction between print and the Internet is breaking down, so too is the distinction between book and article and paragraph. Increasingly, publishers are bundling books together into online services which organize, describe and sell access to books by chapter and by page, presenting 20 or 30 related books as a kind of advanced encyclopedia or subject-specific database. Some publishers, such as *Taylor and Francis* ([www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk](http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk)), allow subscribers to create their own books by bundling together bits and pieces from the thousands of books they sell, choosing a chapter here and a paragraph there. Publishers such as *Oxford University Press* ([www.oxfordscholarship.com](http://www.oxfordscholarship.com)) now provide short abstracts describing the contents of individual chapters within books and have opened these abstracts to keyword searches by the big search engines like Google and Yahoo. In treating individual chapters as discrete texts, these services erode the distinction between article and book chapter as both become search results within the big Internet search engines. The technology tends to strip these items out of the context in which they were produced. It is important for researchers to understand that context in order to better understand the content.

### Reference sources

Reference books such as dictionaries and encyclopedias are easily broken into bite-sized pieces for consumption online because they are collections of short, discrete items, related through cross-references between entries. Large numbers of specialist encyclopedias in the social sciences, which provide concise introductions to key concepts, key debates and key academic writers, are available online. Some of the entries in these reference sources provide valuable introductions to key texts in very specific areas. They provide a good introduction to unfamiliar concepts and writers as you begin your research.

Several publishers who produce a range of closely related reference sources in the social sciences have bundled these books together into online reference



collections, searchable by keyword and subject. Most academic libraries should be subscribed to at least one of the services listed below. Most of these services will allow anyone to search the titles and abstracts to get a sense of what is available, but only make the full text available if your university is subscribed to the service. There is a large overlap between some of these services.

*Encyclopaedia Britannica online (Britannica.com)* One of the best-known general encyclopedias. Some features are available free of charge, including short extracts from entries.

*Gale Virtual Reference Library (www.gale.cengage.com/gvrl)* A vast collection of handbooks and encyclopedias from a large number of academic publishers, including a variety of specialized social science reference works. You can limit your search to books in your subject area and you can export citations.

*International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences (www.sciencedirect.com/science/referenceworks/0080430767)* This massive work from Elsevier, one of the largest social science publishers, includes almost 4,000 articles and is updated annually. Anyone can browse through abstracts describing the entries, organized alphabetically, but the full text is limited to subscribers. Your institution should provide a direct link if it is subscribed.

*Oxford Reference Online (www.oxfordreference.com)* This includes a collection of several social science encyclopedias which can be searched jointly or individually.

*Routledge Reference Resources Online (www.reference.routledge.com)* This includes a collection of social science reference books, currently covering politics, religion and music but with plans for expansion.

*Sage Reference Online (www.sage-e-reference.com/)* Provides online access to their printed encyclopedias and handbooks.

*Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org)* Strictly speaking, Wikipedia doesn't belong here. It has no print version. It is included here because it has become such an important academic reference source. Like the reference sources dealt with above, Wikipedia organizes material by subject and aspires to comprehensive encyclopedic coverage. Wikipedia entries can be written by anyone and altered by anyone. Although it sounds anarchic, this process has seen the development of powerful, well-written and useful articles on a wide range of academic topics. It provides some invaluable introductions to key concepts, debates and thinkers in the social sciences and the humanities. Wikipedia has been rightly criticized for the fact that many readers edit entries in pursuit of their own agendas and for the consequent inclusion of false material. Despite this, it has huge strengths. You would not expect to use it as a central resource for a piece of academic research, or to cite it as a reliable source, but like an encyclopedia, it frequently gives you a good overview of a topic, identifies key debates and provides pointers to key sources. The disputes that rage on Wikipedia are a useful reminder that knowledge is a site of struggle and contest.



Wikipedia is at its best when it comes to obscure topics and current events that would never be covered by any encyclopedia. It is hard to imagine any other way in which information on these obscure topics could be gathered together in such a concise way and be so easy to locate. Despite Wikipedia's flaws, it is simply too valuable a resource to exclude. No encyclopedia can come close to the level of detail it provides and the dynamism of its content. Unlike the sources listed above, it's free.

## Library catalogues

### Worldcat

With over 220 million records from the combined library catalogues of more than 72,000 libraries worldwide, Worldcat is a central source of bibliographic information on academic books. It is expanding its capabilities to include reviews and reader commentary. The service has its weaknesses and omissions, and more sophisticated searching is possible in the catalogues of individual libraries, but it is massive. Dominated as it is by academic libraries, it deals with a very different set of books from those catalogued by online bookstores. There is much greater historical depth and it is much more heavily weighted towards academic materials. You can download references from Worldcat but in many cases they have not been entered correctly and you'll need to edit them a little after importing them to a reference management package. They provide a useful guide to downloading references and a blog that keeps users updated on new developments. Look for a link to Worldcat from your library's web pages to avail of the full capabilities of the service or go to **worldcat.org** to avail of a much more limited service that is freely available to everyone.

Yahoo, Google Scholar, Google Books and several other online services now search inside the Worldcat database. The 'library search' link on Google Scholar results will take you to Worldcat information on the book in question. You can perform further searches on Worldcat.org results but you can search more flexibly by searching the full Worldcat database directly through your library's link. Worldcat allows you to search by 'class descriptor' (the subject classification number for the book) and by subject, providing two ways to identify closely related books. If you do a subject search in Worldcat.org you get a page of results that contain less detail and flexibility than the results received when you search Worldcat directly. When you have located the entry for the book you are interested in, choose the 'Libraries Worldwide' link to identify libraries near you that contain the book. This can help to identify a nearby library which has a particularly strong collection in your area of interest and which would be worth visiting,





to pore over a large number of books in a short time rather than ordering them by Inter Library Loan. If you identify such a library, you can also go directly to its online catalogue and search by the relevant subject and classification number to identify further books that it might be useful to look at while you're there. It is also useful to do a subject search of the catalogues of universities which are home to a specialized research centre or institute in the area you're working on. They should house a large and specialized collection.

### Other library catalogues

*LibDex, The Library Index* ([www.libdex.com](http://www.libdex.com)) Search by keyword or browse by country to find links to the online catalogues of academic and public libraries worldwide.

*The US Library of Congress* ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)) The official library serving the US legislature. The advanced search allows you to go beyond the book catalogue and to search their collections of manuscripts.

*The British Library* ([catalogue.bl.uk](http://catalogue.bl.uk)) As a copyright library the British Library is entitled to receive a copy of every book published in Britain or Ireland and consequently has a much wider collection than most. It includes specialized collections.

*COPAC* ([copac.ac.uk](http://copac.ac.uk)) This allows you to do a unified search of major university research libraries in Britain and Ireland, by subject and by author or title. You can also search it for journals to see which libraries hold the journals you want.

*Books in Print* ([www.booksinprint.com](http://www.booksinprint.com)) Not strictly speaking a catalogue, university librarians and bookshops use this comprehensive guide to books both in and out of print as an authoritative source of information when buying books. It differs from Worldcat in that its primary focus is on making it possible to buy books. It also allows you to search for audio and video. You can sign up to their alert service which will send you an email when new books matching your interests are added to the database. Select 'forthcoming' to search for books that haven't yet been published. It is only available if your institution subscribes.

## Search strategy

### Searching by subject in library catalogues

At the early stages of your literature search you can use online library catalogues to identify closely related books. Search for a key text in Worldcat, one that relates to your specific area of interest rather than to the broad subject area. Then choose 'class descriptors' to return a list of books catalogued under the same classification number, belonging to precisely the same area of specialization as the key text. You can also call up a list of books that have been given the same subject descriptor or relate to the same geographic area.





To search for books on gender and sexuality in Victorian Britain, for example, begin by searching Worldcat for a much-cited text, such as *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* by Judith Walkowitz. The Worldcat entry for the book includes a list of subject categories. Of the half dozen categories into which the book has been placed, one of them clearly fits closely with the research topic of gender and sexuality in Victorian Britain: 'Sex role – England – History – 19th century'. There are 73 items catalogued under this heading, including 54 books. Among the first ten books are several titles that are clearly relevant, including:

- *Limited livelihoods: gender and class in nineteenth-century England*
- *Banishing the beast: sexuality and the early feminists*
- *A man's place: masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England*
- *Gender in English society, 1650–1850: the emergence of separate spheres?*

You can use the same strategy to search for books by subject in your own library catalogue. You can also access Worldcat via Google Scholar. Search for the book (using the author surname and the first part of the title). Then click on the 'library search' link for the book. This brings you directly to the Worldcat entry for the book, including the list of subject categories. When you click on 'Sex role – England – History – 19th century' you get a list of all the other books in Worldcat classified under this heading but it differs from the result generated by the Worldcat database, generating 128 results. It appears to include duplicates that are not included in the Worldcat database results.

All 30 Books 25 Internet 3 Visual 1 Sound 1

Limit results: Any Audience Any Content Any Format Search

**City of dreadful delight : narratives of sexual danger in late-Victorian London /**  
 Author: Walkowitz, Judith R. Publication: Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1992  
 Document: English : Book Internet Resource  
 Libraries Worldwide: 616  
 More Like This: [Search for versions with same title and author](#) | [Advanced options ...](#)  
 See more details for locating this item

**A prescription for murder : the Victorian serial killings of Dr. Thomas Neill Cream /**  
 Author: McLaren, Angus. Publication: Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1993  
 Document: English : Book Internet Resource  
 Libraries Worldwide: 606  
 More Like This: [Search for versions with same title and author](#) | [Advanced options ...](#)  
 See more details for locating this item

**A man's place masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England /**  
<http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=52847>  
 Author: Tosh, John. Publication: New Haven [Conn.] : Yale University Press, 1999  
 Document: English : Internet Resource Computer File  
 Libraries Worldwide: 490  
 More Like This: [Search for versions with same title and author](#) | [Advanced options ...](#)

Figure 2.1 Worldcat results for subject category 'Sex role – England – History – 19th century'

## Online bookshops

Online bookshops provide powerful bibliographic searching tools as an inadvertent by-product of their efforts to sell books. Unlike library catalogues, they don't allow you to download references easily and often make it difficult to find the citation information you need. They make short descriptions of books available, often including a listing of contents, and allow us to search for books in novel ways. The online bookshops discussed below also provide significant added information on books.

*Amazon.com/Amazon.co.uk/Amazon.ca* Amazon has become an increasingly powerful and important source of bibliographic information over the past few years and provides several unique ways of locating books by subject. Through arrangements with a variety of other booksellers, including second-hand booksellers, it provides one of the largest bibliographic databases in existence.

'Customers who bought this item also bought' provides a unique insight into the books which other people interested in your subject area are currently buying, potentially flagging up recent publications which you weren't aware of. The option to 'Search for books by subject' presents a list of all the subject categories a book fits into. You can select some or all of these categories to get a list of very closely related books.

When you search Amazon by subject you will often be presented with a 'Listmania' column on the side, providing links to short lists of books compiled by people interested in the subject area. For academic topics, a substantial proportion of these are compiled by PhD students. They often provide a commentary on the books, and can sometimes serve as a useful guide to some of the current literature. When you select a list you will also get links to other Listmania lists on related subjects and you can also do a keyword search of all Listmania lists.

Amazon.com (but not Amazon.co.uk) presents you with lists of 'capitalized phrases' (CAPs) and 'statistically improbable phrases' (SIPs) which appear in each book. The SIPs are rare phrases, and many of them are likely to be uniquely associated with the subject you're interested in. They can be a useful source of very specific keywords for use in future searches. They are only provided for books with the 'Search inside this book' or 'Look inside this book' facility.

While reader reviews on Amazon are quite uneven in quality, reviews of academic books are often quite useful because people who have gone to the trouble of accessing the academic literature on the topic generally have more than a casual interest in the topic. In addition, Amazon often links to reviews in print publications.

Amazon.com includes citation searching features, providing links to books cited in the book you're looking at and 'Books that cite this book'. These features appear to be limited to citations in books on the Amazon database that have the 'Search inside this book' feature and therefore miss out on many citations.

The Amazon bookstores serving separate national markets have quite different collections of books and it is well worth searching Amazon UK, Amazon Canada and Amazon in the USA for English-language books. Amazon's 'Search inside this book' feature allows you to search the full text of selected books and is dealt with below along with other services providing access to the full text of books online.

*Goodreads* ([www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)) This is a kind of social network for book readers that also provides many of the features we find in Amazon. You can join and create groups and add 'friends'. The reader reviews and the 'listopia' lists can be useful research resources.

*Blackwell's* ([bookshop.blackwell.co.uk](http://bookshop.blackwell.co.uk)) Includes reader reviews and ratings and a 'People who bought this also bought' heading. It provides library classification numbers.

*Barnes and Noble* ([www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com)) This site provides short extracts from press reviews of books and allows you to search for 'more on this subject' by ticking the relevant subject classifications. They include a 'People who bought this book also bought' section.

### Search tip

#### Tracing a book through its ISBN

Occasionally, you may need to gather as much information as possible on a particular book. Enter the book's 10 or 13 digit ISBN into Wikipedia's 'book sources' search ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources)). This retrieves links to the records for this book in numerous sources, including Amazon, Worldcat, Google Books and numerous library catalogues. It also provides links to related editions.

## Full-text books online

In the past few years there has been a dramatic expansion in the availability of full-text books online, in a variety of different forms. While many of these texts, such as the reference books mentioned above, are bundled together into collections open to paying subscribers, many other texts are freely available online to varying degrees. In addition to the large commercial e-book market, and the significant number of free e-book titles available through online bookshops, the full text of books is made available online in a variety of other ways. Printed books originate as computer files these days and it is a relatively simple matter to make them available online whether or not they are sold as e-books. In addition,

a number of projects have been systematically scanning in the text of older books. Once online, they can be searched much more quickly and flexibly than the printed version, and searched as part of a wider collection of books. The fact that we can now do keyword searches across millions of book titles is revolutionizing the way in which we use books. Now that it is an easy matter to identify the two or three paragraphs in a book that relate to our precise query, the temptation is strong to do no more than look at the few sentences of text that surround our query without engaging with the book as a whole, not that this is a big problem. There will be core texts that you need to read from cover to cover and others that are valuable to you only for a passing reference that they make to your topic.

### Google Books ([books.google.com](http://books.google.com))

Google Books has become a truly phenomenal resource over the past few years and now searches a database of over 7 million books. Initially, Google made arrangements with thousands of individual publishers to make the full text of their books searchable. This created a large searchable collection but it was far from comprehensive. Then Google embarked on their 'Library Project' in collaboration with a number of academic research libraries and public libraries to systematically scan in their entire collections of books in order to create something close to a complete and comprehensive repository of all the books ever published. Google has run into repeated legal difficulties as many publishers and authors of the books they were scanning contested their right to do this. Google argued that since they weren't providing users with access to the full text of these books, but only with the facility to search the full text, they weren't infringing copyright laws. In 2005 a coalition of authors and publishers brought Google to court claiming breach of copyright, bringing this Google project to a halt (BBC News, 2005; Wyatt, 2005). The dispute had still not been settled by 2011. If and when it is settled, Google has proposed providing free access at a limited number of computers in US public libraries and academic libraries while also selling access to the database on a subscription basis. If a book is out of copyright, you can view the full text. In the case of most books, you can view only a few sentences around your search term, or a limited number of pages, depending on the arrangements made with individual publishers. The advanced search allows you to search by author and title and to limit your search by date. You can export citation details for individual books.

Google Scholar ([scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com)) provides a significantly different way of searching the Google book collection, providing information which is unavailable through Google Books. A result in Google Scholar provides a 'Library search' link which will connect you to a Worldcat entry for the book and allow you to see if the



book is held by a library near you. The title links you to the book in Google Books, if it is included there, and to publication details in [getcited.org](http://getcited.org), if it is not. The 'cited by' link will bring up a list of sources in which the book is mentioned, including books, academic articles and a large number of pages from the open Web.

### Search tip

#### Printing from Google Books and Amazon Books

You can download and print out-of-copyright books on Google Books but you cannot do this for the vast majority of titles that you find there, even though you will be able to see extracts on the screen in front of you. If you only want to print a few pages, you can get around this problem by taking a picture of your screen. On a PC, press the 'Print Screen' key on your keyboard, then paste into the image-editing program you usually use to view/edit pictures and crop it. Then print the image. On a Mac, use the 'Grab' utility to 'capture' the part of the screen that's relevant to you and save it as an image which you can then print.

### Creating a personal library online

The newest research management tools allow us to build up comprehensive personal libraries of the articles we use, and allow us to search the full text of these personal libraries. It is much more difficult to do it for books, unless you purchase all of the books you want to use as e-books. Google Books' *My library* feature allows you to partially remedy this problem by adding books from Google Books to a personal library. To use the feature you need a (free) Google account. Once logged into Google Books through this account, you can create 'bookshelves' for your various research areas. Once you have built up your library you can run searches that are restricted to the books in your library. Although you can organize the books by topic in 'bookshelves', you cannot, unfortunately, limit your search to an individual bookshelf or a set of bookshelves. If Google were to add this feature, it would significantly increase the value of this resource. Every time you search Google Books the search results will indicate whether a book is already in your library or not, making it easier to fill the gaps in your collection through general searches on your topic. You can't be certain of course that you have done a comprehensive search of the full text of all of the books in your 'My library' given that Google Books does not search the full text of all of its titles, but coverage is strong and extensive enough to make it a valuable exercise nonetheless.



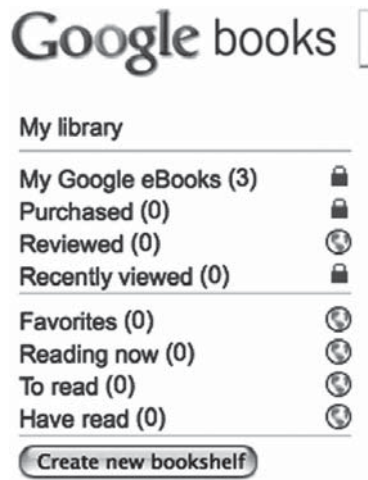


Figure 2.2 My Library image

This kind of resource suggests new ways of searching that are significantly different from the techniques we use in most databases. You can't use broad search terms online because they bring up too many irrelevant results, but you can use them to great effect if you are searching a tightly bounded, personalized set of sources. If you remember an argument made in one of the books you read but can't remember which book, you can search for it using the kind of simple broad searches that are usually ineffective. If you remember only that the sentence you want to quote includes the word 'treachery', for example, a simple search on that word might be enough to locate it.

In a tightly bounded collection like this we can search for the name of an article or author to examine how a particular piece of work has been discussed in the literature. We can search on a broad concept such as 'genealogy' or 'hierarchy' to see how this concept has been discussed in our particular research area. It becomes much easier to identify how a particular metaphor or argument is deployed in your field. Your personal library has a URL which you can pass on to colleagues to allow them to search bookshelves that you choose to make 'public'. A research team can build a shared library of books.

Amazon's 'Look inside' ([amazon.com](http://amazon.com), [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk) or [amazon.ca](http://amazon.ca))

This service is similar in many ways to Google Books. As well as selling e-books, Amazon has made arrangements with a large number of individual publishers to make the full text of their books searchable online. The arrangements made with individual publishers determine the level of access you can get to the text around



your search terms. You can't view or print entire books, but in many cases you can read the full text of the page on which your search term appears. Where the full text is not searchable, 'Look inside' often allows you to view the index and contents pages and sections such as the bibliography. In some cases, **Amazon.co.uk** provides full-text searching of a book not available for full-text searching in **Amazon.com** and vice versa, emphasizing once again that it's often worth doing a search on both. In addition, all three of the Amazon services available in English can give radically different results for the same search on a specific phrase. A search that brings up 20 results in amazon.co.uk might bring up only one in amazon.com and results are laid out differently in each of the services. While coverage is uneven and far from comprehensive, it includes many of the largest and most important academic publishers, providing access to vast numbers of high-quality, recent academic books.

By allowing us to simultaneously search the full text of hundreds of thousands of books it provides a way for us to identify books which make reference to very specific issues we are interested in. It will turn up works that you would probably never find by any other route because the book as a whole does not relate to your subject area even though it may have a useful page or two directly relevant to your research topic. It is most appropriate for 'needle in the haystack' searches at the later stages of your research rather than for general subject searches. In searching the full text of bibliographies in books it also provides a new kind of citation search. Searching for the full title of a book in Amazon, and the author surname if necessary, will yield a list of references and citations in other books, providing another way to identify texts which refer to the key works you are interested in.

It can also be useful to carry out searches of individual books, in either Amazon or Google Books. With a copy of the book beside you, the 'Search inside the book' feature can supplement the index and contents page in the printed versions. Print indexes can sometimes be quite weak and the online search can be a valuable supplement when searching for an elusive reference in an individual book. The Amazon and Google full-text collections overlap but both services include the full text of books not available from the other.

## **Search strategy**

### **Using a key text to identify related works**

A good book on your topic can be the ideal starting point for identifying other high-quality work directly relevant to your research. It is certainly a much faster and efficient way to find related work than doing keyword searches on massive databases.

*(Continued)*



(Continued)

First, you need to identify a book that is central enough to your topic that many people writing on the topic feel they need to reference it. At the same time it needs to be specific enough that it is not cited by people from a wide range of disciplines.

For research on magic, demons and witchcraft in medieval Europe, for example, a good starting point might be a book such as *Europe's Inner Demons*, by Norman Cohn. While not everyone agrees with the conclusions of the author, it is a key text on the topic and a large proportion of people writing on this area are likely to reference it. At the same time your search will exclude the masses of popular literature on the topic which don't make reference to academic work like this.

This search does not need to be a marathon affair. Ten minutes should be all it takes to quickly search a service. There is no need to check out every vaguely promising looking item. If nothing looks useful at first glance simply move on quickly to another service. The basic principle is to do large numbers of quick searches using the same specific search term. No need to linger. In the example below, Amazon.com is used but the same general approach can be usefully applied to Amazon.co.uk, Google Scholar, Google Books and Worldcat.

After you have used a few services you are likely to find that your searches are yielding diminishing returns and I don't suggest you exhaustively mine all of these.

On the Amazon.com page for *Europe's Inner Demons*, the section on 'Customers who bought this item also bought' (see Figure 2.3 below) turns up several books which appear to be directly relevant. Following the link to one of them, *Witchcraft in Europe: 400-1700*, we see that this is a collection of primary sources on the topic. The fact that it comes from a university press provides another indication that it is an academic book, while reader reviews indicate its relevance to historical scholarship on 'witchcraft'.

The 'Look inside' link to the 'table of contents' for this book allows you to confirm its academic character and lists the chapters, giving you a better idea of whether some or all of them are directly relevant to your research. You can 'Search inside the book' to see if it contains information on very specific topics of interest to you.

The section for 'Customers who bought this item also bought' on this page points in turn to several more academic books which appear to be directly relevant to the topic and which can also be explored through Amazon.com.

There is a link here to a Listmania list on 'Great Witchcraft Books', which brings together about a dozen books, the bulk of which are academic. You begin to see that four or five of the books are mentioned again and again, providing a crude indication that they are regarded as key texts.

There is little need to use the more sophisticated searching options available here because the 'Customers' list has provided more than enough to start with. If it hadn't turned up anything, your next step would be to explore some of the other options on the page for *Europe's Inner Demons*, including 'Similar items by subject' and 'Citations', which lists books that cite this book as well as books that are cited in it.

The sponsored links on these pages are of no use, pointing as they do to a world of magic and witchcraft merchandising which bears little relation to academic study of the topic. This is also the case with some of the Listmania lists on the topic, which are

dominated by popular books with little or no connection to the academic debates. They provide a hint of the vast store of popular materials on the subject that you have almost completely excluded from your search results simply by using a key academic text as the starting point for your search.

The result of this quick search is a list of eight to ten key academic books in the area which are directly related to your topic and whose contents you can explore if the 'Search inside the book' facility is available for those particular books. If it isn't, you can check **books.google.com** to see if they make the full text searchable. These books can in turn lead you to other books and to articles. When you come to search the databases of journals, which is dealt with in Chapter 3, you can search for articles which cite any of perhaps three or four of these key texts. You can also use them as search terms when you are looking for material on the open Web.

In the process of doing this search you will also have become familiar with some of the core terms which are used by all of these authors, but which relate uniquely to this subject area. These can also be a useful source of search terms when you continue on to do keyword searches of the full text of articles and the open Web.

#### Customers who bought this item also bought

[The Pursuit of the Millennium : Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages \(Galaxy Books\) by Norman Cohn](#)

[Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come, 2nd Edition by Norman Cohn](#)

[The Night Battles : Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century by Carlo Ginzburg](#)

[Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History \(Middle Ages Series\) by Alan Charles Kors](#)

[The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe \(2nd Edition\) by Brian Levack](#)

**Explore similar items:** in [Books](#)

**Figure 2.3** Books bought by Amazon.com customers who bought *Europe's Inner Demons*

## E-books

The spread of e-book readers in recent years has facilitated a shift by both publishers and booksellers from print to e-books. E-book readers such as the Kindle, the Nook and the Sony Reader allow you to search and annotate and highlight text from your collection of e-books but they have limitations as research tools. You have to purchase the books before you can search them (unless they are out of copyright) and they are not yet well integrated with referencing software. The main advantage of e-books is that they can be purchased and browsed and searched much more flexibly than printed books. Publishers are increasingly bundling related books into collections and selling access to the package as a whole. Users aren't expected to read cover to cover,

but to download or print a chapter here and a page there. E-book software generally allows you to mark important passages and add your comments and sometimes allows you to copy and paste quotes into Word documents, automatically generating citations. Academic libraries are increasingly purchasing access to e-books instead of, or as well as, purchasing print titles, and you may find that much of your e-book usage takes place online, through your library's website.

*Project Gutenberg* ([www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)) One of the earliest online book projects, this is dedicated to providing free access to books that are out of copyright and currently has a collection of over 36,000 free e-books.

*The Internet Archive* ([www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)) This includes the full text of around 3 million out-of-copyright books, including over a million books digitized in cooperation with libraries and foundations.

*Taylor and Francis* ([www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk](http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk)) Several thousand of their printed books are available as e-books and there are a variety of ways to search and buy content from these books. Unlike many of the big online services, this service is aimed at individual users as well as institutions and is extremely flexible. The ePrint and eCopy options allow you to print and copy content for as little as a few pence or cents per page in some cases. eSubscribe allows you to buy access to material for as short a timespan as 24 hours. eCompile allows you to select content from a wide range of books, putting together a page here and a chapter there to create your own customized e-book. You can then annotate and bookmark items within the customized e-book. It's all very innovative, and has the potential to change the way we think of books as a research resource, from something you read to part of a collection you search. But all of these facilities are strictly limited in value because of the fact that they are limited to the output of one, albeit large, publisher.

When the various e-book services are fully standardized and integrated with research management packages it will become a far more attractive proposition to make intensive use of e-books.

*Oxford Scholarship Online* ([www.oxfordscholarship.com](http://www.oxfordscholarship.com)) This service includes almost 5,000 academic books published by Oxford University Press and new titles are added regularly. All users can search and view book and chapter abstracts freely and these abstracts are now also searchable via Ingenta and Proquest, databases that used to be limited to academic articles. Since Ingenta is also searched by Google Scholar, you also search the Oxford Scholarship collection when you search in Google Scholar. This emphasizes the rapid multiplication of routes to any given document and the breakdown in the distinction between book chapters and journal articles. Subscribers, or those whose institutions are subscribed, can view the full text of books and download references.

## Book reviews

Book reviews in journals, papers and magazines are now much more accessible and easy to search online. In addition, reader reviews posted to online bookshops and catalogues provide a valuable new resource, even if the quality of reviews is uneven. Some academic websites have used the Internet to distribute new kinds of book review. These are longer than normal because they don't suffer from restrictions on space, and often allow a right of reply to the reviewed author. These developments are radically altering the nature of book reviewing, by increasing the levels of debate and dialogue taking place around books.

*Amazon.com/Amazon.co.uk* customer reviews. The selection of reviews on these two services overlaps, but not completely.

*Books in Print* ([www.booksinprint.com](http://www.booksinprint.com)) This includes over half a million book reviews.

*Book Review Index* ([www.gale.com/BRIOnline](http://www.gale.com/BRIOnline)) This is a database of reviews of approximately 5.6 million items from thousands of journals, newspapers and magazines going back as far as 1969. It is available if your institution has subscribed.

*H-Review* ([www.h-net.org/reviews](http://www.h-net.org/reviews)) This is entirely devoted to distributing reviews of academic books in the humanities and the social sciences, and is freely accessible to all. The selection is quite limited but the quality is generally high.

## Publishers

Publishers like to develop concentrated expertise in specific areas. When your research is at an advanced stage you will probably be able to identify a few publishers who specialize in your areas of interest. At this stage it can be useful to sign up to their alerting services. You can generally select the subject areas you are interested in and receive regular email alerts when new books in those areas are published. Below are a few examples of publisher alerting services:

- Wiley-Blackwell E-mail Alerts ([www.wiley.com/bw/ealerts/](http://www.wiley.com/bw/ealerts/))
- Cambridge Alerts ([www.cambridge.org/alerts](http://www.cambridge.org/alerts))
- Sage Product Alerts ([www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com))
- Taylor and Francis eUpdates (including Routledge) ([www.taylorandfrancis.com/resources/email\\_alerts](http://www.taylorandfrancis.com/resources/email_alerts))
- University of California Press Enews ([www.ucpress.edu](http://www.ucpress.edu))
- The University of Chicago Press New Releases Notification ([www.press.uchicago.edu/mailnotifier](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/mailnotifier))

## Exercises

### Exercise 1: Finding information about a book

Choose a key book related to your research topic and search for the book in at least three of the following services:

- Worldcat
- Amazon.com
- Amazon.co.uk
- Your library catalogue
- Google Books
- Google Scholar
- Books in Print

- 1 List the information about the book provided by each of these services (including reviews, facilities to access information on related books, and access to some or all of the book's content). You don't need to list all the citation details, just note whether they provide full citation details or whether certain citation elements are missing.
- 2 Which of these services allows you to download references?
- 3 Briefly outline the differences in the type of information provided on the book by the different services.
- 4 What was the most useful feature of each service?
- 5 Do any of these services provide useful information about the book that is not available in any of the other services?
- 6 Were any of the reader reviews useful? In what way?
- 7 Briefly describe the strengths and weaknesses of each service in providing information on your selected text.

### Exercise 2: Finding a reading list

Use a search engine such as Google or Yahoo or one of the online teaching resources discussed in this chapter to identify a course syllabus that provides a reading list and/or topic summaries that are directly relevant to your research topic. Note that many syllabi do not include reading lists.

- 1 Write a paragraph describing how you found the relevant syllabus, noting in particular any difficulties in locating it.
- 2 Did you find that your topic was classified or described differently at different universities? Briefly describe any notable differences.

### Exercise 3: Using a key text to identify related works

Choose a key book related to your research topic. In each of the services listed below, search for the book and then use all of the features that allow you to find related books to identify at least three other books directly relevant to your research.

- Amazon.com
- Amazon.co.uk
- Worldcat
- Your library catalogue
- Google Books
- Google Scholar

- 1 List the three books identified through each service.
- 2 Write a short comparison of the three services' usefulness for identifying related books.

### Exercise 4: Finding books that cite a book

Identify a key book in your research area. Use the following services to identify other books that make reference to it.

- Amazon.co.uk
- Amazon.com
- Scholar.google.com
- Books.google.com

- 1 List the books you have identified through each service.
- 2 How much overlap is there between the results returned by the different services?
- 3 Is there any difference in the results returned by Amazon.com and Amazon.co.uk?
- 4 Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each service.

### Exercise 5: Finding book reviews

Identify a key book in your research area. Gather all of the reviews of the book that you can find online, using all of the following services. If your library is not subscribed to the two subscription services, just leave them out.

- Amazon.com
- Amazon.co.uk
- Books in Print ([www.booksinprint.com](http://www.booksinprint.com))
- Book Review Index ([www.gale.com/BRIOnline](http://www.gale.com/BRIOnline))
- H-Review ([www.h-net.org/reviews](http://www.h-net.org/reviews))
- Google Scholar
- Google Books
- A general search engine such as Google or Yahoo

- 1 List the reviews, including the details of the publications they appeared in (if they were published).
- 2 Compare the relative usefulness of the various services in identifying useful reviews. Do some reviews appear in more than one source?