Welcome back. This is Hannah, a science librarian from OSU, again.

This module will cover another method for finding past research on your topic. In the previous module on refining a research question, I used the 1Search database to learn whether or not other researchers have written about my geographical area or habitat and scanned the titles in the results to see if the key words I was using matched the language that scientists used. In this module, I will show you how to use advanced features in a different search tool to come up with more key words, to determine when you might need to broaden or narrow your search, and I will show you how to get to the full-text of the article in a library search tool.

In the previous module, we used a broad search tool – 1Search. Just a reminder – 1Search covers almost every topic and has access to books, newspaper articles, scholarly articles, videos, and many more things. Sometimes a good second step is to try a more targeted search tool. The library calls search tools databases. Databases can search a particular topic area like Wildlife or Business. Or they sometimes search a particular source type, like just newspapers or just scholarly articles. For FW 107, try out a database that more closely matches your topic. To find a database like that, click on Databases A-Z on the library’s home page.

The library has many databases. To find one that matches your topic, start by using the subject search to find Fisheries and Wildlife.

The Fisheries and Wildlife page gives examples and descriptions of databases that are relevant to Fisheries and Wildlife researchers. The databases under Best Bets are usually the most relevant.

I will be using my mallards’ survival research question again. The best match for this topic is probably Wildlife & Ecology Studies Worldwide. From the description, I can see that this database covers the topic of wildlife research and that includes information from journal articles, books, conference papers, government reports and more. When you are trying out your own research question, pick the database that most closely matches your topic. The tips I give will apply regardless of whether you choose a fisheries or a wildlife specific database.

If you are off-campus, you will be prompted to login with your OSU ID before you can get into any of the library’s databases. The library has to subscribe to each of these databases, so you can’t just Google the name of the database. You have to get to the database via the library’s website so that you are prompted to login.

After logging in, you will see a search screen something like this. Most databases have several search boxes and several ways to narrow your search. Because this is a subject specific database focused on fewer topics, I will start with just a few keywords. Being overly specific or using too many words might lead to getting few or no results.

I will start by entering mallard – I see that the database is prompting me to use mallard duck. Often this means that will be a more successful term to use in this database. I will also enter survival.
I get 143 results. This is a pretty good number – it’s large enough that I can get some ideas of the different kinds of research that have been done on this topic, but not so large that I won’t be able to sort through the information. If I had fewer than 5-10 results, I would remove one of my keywords and try just using one keyword to start.

Notice that I can also narrow to just academic journals in this database as well.

I will show you two ways to use the database to find more keywords to use. First, look on the left-hand side of the page under the Subject section. The subject section tells you the main keywords or ideas assigned to these 143 articles. I can use these ideas to see what other researchers have studied about my topic. The most common keywords are on top, and the least common are on the bottom. For example, I see the Latin names for the birds, common broad geographical areas studied, but also some hints as to what factors go into determining survival such as egg incubation or predation. I might be interested in the wildlife management topic because I want to know what management concerns might come up in a drought year. I can click on that item and see the 18 results about management practices and mallard survival.

Using the words suggested by the database helps me narrow down from a broad search using language other researchers use.

Click on the article title to read the abstract or description of the article. This also leads to another way to come up with new keywords. Look through the Subject terms and keywords assigned to the article and then re-use those terms in your own searches.

To get to the actual article in any of the library’s databases, click the Find it @ OSU button. You may be asked to login to the library system again. If you see a green view online circle, this means we have paid for access to this journal. Click on any of the publisher links to open the article. And then find the PDF icon on the following page.

If you don’t see a green view online button, we don’t have a subscription to that journal. But you can click on the request from interlibrary loan link to get a copy of the article.

In summary, use a subject database to target your search to just your area of interest. Second, start with a broad search using a few words, then narrow your search down using the database’s suggested subjects that best match your topic. Third, use the Find it @ OSU button to open the full-text of the article or to request the article from another library.

That’s the end of this tutorial on finding past research on your topic. To get more help use the library guide for FW 107. My contact info is on that page and you are welcome to ask me more questions.