
A GUIDE TO HELP YOU FIND INFORMATION FROM PERIODICALS

But first ...what is a periodical?

Periodicals typically consist of a collection of articles. Everyone is familiar with newspapers and magazines, but perhaps not as familiar with journals. There are three main kinds of periodical:

Newspapers: A newspaper is "issued at stated, frequent intervals (usually daily), containing news, opinions, advertisements, and other items of current, often local, interest. Main features include:

- Frequent publication.
- Newsprint (the inexpensive paper newspapers are printed on).
- Unbound sections.
- Lots of advertising.
- News reports written by field reporters.
- Lots of photographs.
- Answers to who, what, when, where, why, how.

Magazines: A magazine is "a periodical for general reading, containing articles on various subjects by different authors. Main features include:

- A glossy look to attract the casual reader.
- Lots of advertising.
- Short articles (compared to a journal).
- Lots of photographs.

Journals: A journal contains of scholarly articles. It disseminates current information on research and development in a particular subject field. Main features are:

- A plain cover.
- Mostly text.
- Authors with university affiliations or professional titles.
- An abstract at the beginning of each article.
- Scholarly references, including a bibliography or list of references.
- Very little or no advertising.
- Longer articles (compared to a magazine).
- Tables and graphs rather than photographs.

How do periodicals fit into your research?

Periodicals often provide information that is:

- **Timely:** usually daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly and are therefore more up to date than books
- **Concise:** Their articles are briefer than books. Editorial panels often restrict the length of articles, so that they can be certain to have enough contributions to meet the speedier publication dates.
- **Authoritative:** Periodicals are also authoritative in a way that distinguishes them from books. Newspaper articles are primary sources; that means they are based on first-person accounts and experiences-a newspaper reporter goes directly to these sources. Journal articles are written by experts, and the articles are also often screened by a "jury" of experts before they are published. Magazine articles may be less authoritative, since they are often written for a popular audience by non-experts.

Physical format: The majority are published in paper. Some older issues in the Library have been bound together so that they have the appearance of a book. Other older issues might be on microfilm. These are held in the periodicals store and can be read using the reader printer provided. This machine, as its name suggests, allows you to both read the document and print from it. The usual photocopying charges apply. Increasingly more issues are appearing in electronic format delivered from remote sites, usually via the internet.

How do you find information within them?

When you have the citation to a specific article check the IPAC to see if we take the title and what our holdings are. You will also be able to see if we have electronic access. We may either take a run of the title that you want or an offprint has been placed in the Short Loan collection of the Library.

When searching the IPAC make sure that you use a TITLE search and don't use the abbreviated titles that are often used in periodical indexes; enter the first few words of the title, omitting "a," "an" or "the" at the beginning of the title

When you do not have a specific citation, use abstracts and indexes to find articles from journals. They are especially useful when you are building up a bibliography on a subject of your choice and you do not have any recommended reading. Please note however that these indexes only provide references so that you can find the full text of the article from a particular source.

For tips on how to find full text articles see the section below.

You should also note that none of the indexes relate to our stock. The Library purchases them and therefore you need to check our catalogue to see if the Library holds the journal you require. If the Library does not take a particular journal, you can apply for it through our Document Delivery Service. This service costs a minimum of £2 per application.

Most indexes are now available in electronic format and most will be password protected usually through an administrative system called ATHENS. Check your e mail to see if you have received a message concerning ATHENS. If there is a message then you have automatically been allocated an ATHENS password. Please keep this message so that you can refer to it at a future date. If in doubt go to the Help desk to obtain a password. You will need to show your student card. If you cannot get into the Library we will be able to help you over the phone or via e mail, but we will need to go through some initial identity checks. We are required under the licences to these databases to ensure that they are only used by Staffordshire University registered students.

Some databases are hosted over the internet and some are available over the CD Rom network, others can be accessed from our standalone machines near to the Helpdesk. For a full list go to the Library homepage, choose Online Library and then online databases. For databases suitable for your subject area, go to Learning support and choose subject help or contact your subject librarian.

How to find full text articles

Increasingly the Library holds full text articles that you can read from your PC's desktop. Many of these articles are restricted to periodicals that we subscribe to in printed format, but not always. For instance you can view the full text of leading national and regional newspapers published in the UK and abroad by using Lexis Nexis. To use this service you will need an ATHENS password. Visit the Online library from the Library homepage and choose Electronic Journals.

The major provider of the Library's full text service is SwetsWise. Go to Online Library from the Library homepage and then choose Electronic journals.

From this page you can choose to either look up the title of a journal using the alphabetical listing provided. Alternatively you can go to the keyword search facility. If using this search off campus you will need an ATHENS.

In addition to SwetsWise you will find a listing of other similar services on this page.

As you can see these services cover a wide range of subjects. As a starting point try SwetsWise first. If you have no success in finding articles for your subject area, then spend some time browsing the list of services available or ask for help from your subject librarian.

Please remember that these services point you to articles that the Library pays for. You may also find electronic full text articles freely available on the internet. Try a service like [BUBL](#) or use one of the subject gateways.

Tips for searching electronic databases

When using electronic databases (like SwetsWise or abstracts and indexes) for researching subjects thinking up keywords is very important. So spend some time brainstorming your topic and thinking carefully about what information you wish to find. Write down keywords that you can search. Think about the different facets of your topic and work out the best ways to combine your keywords to achieve the most relevant results. Always consult any help screens available. It may seem tiresome to begin with, but it will ensure that you achieve the best results.

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