

Sociological Abstracts Database Guide

What is Sociological Abstracts?

It is the most important database internationally for finding references to journal articles for Sociology. It also includes references to books, book chapters, dissertations and conference papers. It goes back to 1963.

Accessing Sociological Abstracts

It can be accessed from the Library's home page. Select either Subject Guides – Sociology, or Databases.

Search steps

Your search will be more effective if you give some thought to creating an effective search strategy. Consider the following:-

- Identify the key concepts in your search topic; for example:-
Topic:- *issues that concern those who demonstrate against globalisation*
Key concepts:- *demonstrate / globalisation*
- Authors may write about your concepts using different words or spellings so you need to allow for this when doing your search. You may also want to broaden or narrow your search using related concepts.
 - Synonyms e.g. *demonstrate, protest*
 - Spelling variations e.g. *globalisation / globalization*
 - Related terms e.g. *anti-globalisation*
- Use truncation
 - Use the truncation symbol (*) at the end of the root of the word to pick up the plural and other variant endings e.g. *protest** also finds *protestor(s), demonstrat** also finds *demonstrator(s) / demonstration(s)*
 - You can also use the asterisk in the middle of a word to indicate an unlimited number of characters e.g. *behavio*r* finds both *behaviour* and *behavior*.
 - Use “?” where the variant spelling involves one character e.g. *globali?ation*

For more information about constructing a search strategy see

http://library.canterbury.ac.nz/databases/guides/2006/PDF/database_skills.pdf

Enter Your Search

The search screen defaults to the Advanced option.

Enter your terms into the search form using the structured boxes. All terms must be connected with *or*, *and* or *not*.

Use *or* to connect synonyms or related terms. This will find either or both terms in a record. Enter these terms across the line.

Use *and* to find both terms together in a record. This makes your search more specific. Enter these terms in the boxes down the search screen. Make sure you have selected *and* from the drop-down menu.

Select the fields you want to search in from the drop-down menus at the end of each search box. *Keyword* is the default. *Anywhere* usually finds too many irrelevant records.

View results

Note the tabs for the different publication types retrieved. If you want to view just the peer-reviewed journal articles click on this tab.

Find the full text of the article

Sociological Abstracts provides references to journal articles, etc., but not the text. However, each record has a link to the Library's holdings. If there is an electronic copy you can link directly to it, otherwise you will be given the option to search the Library's catalogue for a print copy.

- Click Search for Full text. The article will come onto the screen if available electronically.
- If not, click either Search by Journal Title or Search by ISSN to see if a paper copy is available in the Library.

Print, Save or Email References

When looking at your results you may want to mark some records for keeping.

- Mark the selected records by clicking in the checkbox next to the record.
- Click the Save/Print/Email records link.
- Click the drop-down menu if you want to change the format option. (Short format includes the abstract).
- Click Email, Save or Print Preview.

Other search tips

Thesaurus

The Thesaurus lists the standard search terms used by the database. The thesaurus terms are the descriptors that appear in the database record. Use the thesaurus for finding the standard terms, possible synonyms and related terms and definitions. e.g. see *Globalization* for standard spelling, a definition and related terms.

Demonstrations indicates that the standard term is Protest Movements

- Click the Search Tools tab, then Thesaurus, or use the direct link at the bottom of the search screen.
- Type a term in the box and click Go.

Indexes

This is a useful approach when searching for authors and articles in particular publications. See More Search Options on the search screen or the link at the bottom of the screen.

- Author. An alphabetical list of all the authors on Sociological Abstracts. Enables you to search all forms of the author's name e.g. R. Brown, R. M. Brown, Robert Brown.
- Journal name. An alphabetical list of the journals indexed on the database. You can select those you want to search in.

“Cited by” references

This link within a record leads you to articles that have cited this one i.e. it is listed in the bibliography. Exploring works that have cited your first article is a good way of tracing the development of a topic and broadening your subject search.

History

Here you can see all the searches you've done so far. You can rerun previous searches, edit them or recombine previous searches to create new ones.

Search alerts

If you have an on-going interest in a topic you may like to save your search as an alert. As new records are added to the database matching your search they will automatically be emailed to you.

- Perform your search and on the results screen click Alert Me.
- Register first to create a personal profile
- Select the format, expiry date and delivery method (email or RSS feed) and click Save
- To renew or delete alerts, click Please log in to My Research.

Refining your search

Too few records?

To broaden your search try the following:-

- Check for typos and misspellings.
- Think of synonyms or related concepts. The Thesaurus may be useful for this.
- Try American spelling and terminology
- Check that you have used the "or" connector for synonyms or related terms.
- Truncate your search terms to retrieve variant endings.

Too many records?

To make your search more specific try the following:-

- Check that you have used the *and* connector correctly to narrow your search.
- Add another concept to your search using the connector *and*.
- Use a narrower search word e.g. for "social class" use "middle class", "underclass", etc.
- Look in the Thesaurus or Descriptor field for search terms and limit your search to the Descriptor field.
- Limit your search by language, publishing year, to a particular journal, etc.

Further help

Click Help within the database for online help.

Contact Patricia Jordan, the Sociology Librarian, at patricia.jordan@canterbury.ac.nz