Information Searching Tips

Key information sources can be found at:
- University of Manitoba Libraries website: http://umanitoba.ca/libraries
  - Look for One Stop Search, Library Catalogue and Subject Guides.
- Library Subject Guide for College of Nursing: http://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/collegeofnursing

GETTING STARTED

Background Information: What kind of information do you need? Sometimes a source of background information will help you get started on a topic. If you are just starting out on a topic, look at the information in your textbook, check the Libraries' catalogue for another book on the topic, or use an encyclopedia or dictionary to get some facts or definitions.

Foreground Information: When you need information for a more specific topic or question then you are looking for more detailed sources that discuss more than one concept.

Before you begin to search for information, ask yourself what you really need to know about the topic. Try to develop a specific question that can guide your search. Examples:

- What strategies help undergraduate nursing students manage stress?
- How does a specific nursing theory impact on providing patient care?
- Does the timing of introduction of solid foods to infants impact on allergies?
- Can exercise and diet improve blood glucose levels in people with diabetes?

Journal articles are the sources most often used to answer foreground questions. Articles are published in a wide variety of journals and may be original research articles or review articles that analyze and synthesize current research on a topic. Other types of journal articles include opinion, theory development and reports of new programs or initiatives. Most journals (as opposed to magazines) are considered scholarly, academic sources because they are peer-reviewed. This means that the articles have gone through a thorough review process by other experts or peers. Authors need to revise their articles in response to peer review feedback before the article is accepted for publication in the journal.

Databases are most often used to search for journal articles. By entering a search in a database you can find articles that may be published in many different journals. At the University of Manitoba Libraries, One Stop...
Search can be a good starting point for your search. Then you may want to use a subject-specific database such as CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature) or PubMed.

To find databases, use the Libraries’ main website http://umanitoba.ca/libraries or the Nursing Subject Guide http://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/collegeofnursing.

BASIC SEARCHING

A good search strategy begins with a focused search question, usually composed of two or more concepts. For example, Does patient education prevent the development of diabetic foot ulcers in patients with diabetes? Then ask yourself:

- What are the key concepts in your question or topic?
- What terms do you want to use?
- What variations/synonyms are there for your terms?
- Which databases do you want to use?

Search tools that are used in many databases:

OR (to combine synonyms). For example, the search “bed sores” OR “pressure ulcers” will get results that have either of these terms. Use OR to build your search.

AND (to combine different concepts). For example, the search “bed sores” AND prevention will get results that have both of these terms. Use AND to narrow your search.

“Quotation marks” are useful for multiword phrases. For example, “quality of life”, “patient safety”

* the asterisk symbol is used to account for all possible endings. For example, adolescent, adolescents, adolescence

Limits/filters to limit the search to certain dates, types of articles, peer-reviewed status or language.

Revise your search as needed. Look at the articles that you have retrieved and evaluate their usefulness for your research topic. The article title and abstract in the database can help you decide if the article is relevant. Do you see other keywords in the titles and abstracts that you could incorporate into your search? Searching for information often takes some revision and time.

The Full text of the article will be needed if you are going to use it as a source for your paper. Look for the yellow “Get It@UML” button in the Libraries One Stop Search and databases to link to the full text of the article. Remember to give credit to information that you have used by citing the article in your paper when you use it as a source.