

INTRODUCTION TO WORLDCAT¹

By Marvin Hunn

The WorldCat database is a key resource. It includes metadata for millions of items in an enormous range of subjects. It provides comprehensive coverage of books and significant coverage of journal articles. Thousands of libraries catalog their collections in WorldCat. Our local version of WC is <https://dts.on.worldcat.org>. The WC search engine is still immature. WC is improving rapidly and you may discover problems mentioned in this introduction have already been fixed.

The Advanced Search Screen

Figure 100: Advanced Search Screen

The Advanced Search Screen lets you select fields and combine terms with logical operators (AND, OR, NOT). You can also type operators manually, but they must be uppercase. Terms can be grouped with parentheses like this: << (abraham OR isaac) AND (promise OR blessing) >>.

¹ This introduction assumes you are **already familiar** with “Basic Concepts for Database Searching” (<http://library.dts.edu/basic-concepts>) and with the EBSCO search engine. Sample search statements are typographically distinguished like this: << search statement here >>.

Two-letter field codes can be used before terms like this: << AU:Calvin AND TI:institutes >>.

Keyword	AU:Calvin AND TI:institutes
---------	-----------------------------

The main field codes are AU: for author, TI: for title, SU: for subject, SE: for series. Note the colon.

WC automatically stems many words in English to compensate for plurals, grammatical inflection, etc. So << believe >> also matches believer and believing for example. But WC's impoverished version of stemming does not match word roots, so << believe >> does not match the noun belief. Use quotes to turn off stemming.

search (DTS Libraries only)	results	note
	5/8/17	
believe	232,466	
believer	232,466	
believing	232,466	
"believ*"	234,219	approximates stemming
"believe"	106,269	use quotes to turn off stemming
belief	323,109	shows not true stemming above

As you would expect, quotation marks around multiple words search for an exact phrase. Thus << "infant baptism" >> matches the exact phrase. Be sure to use double straight quotes ("infant baptism"), not curly quotes("infant baptism") and not single quotes ('infant baptism'). In addition, WC supports left-anchored phrase searches.² The WC search engine does not provide any other proximity operators. However, proximity plays a role in relevancy ranking (explained below in the section on The Search Results Screen).

Use an asterisk (*) for truncation. Type at least the first three letters of a term followed by an asterisk to match terms that begin with those letters.

Use quotation marks to search for stopwords.³

² Left-anchored means the match begins with the left-most word in the field or subfield. Left-anchored phrase searches are expressed by a field code plus an equals mark, like this: << ti=infant baptism* >>. This example (with truncation) would match any title that begins with the phrase "infant baptism." Left-anchored searches are a good way to search for a one word title or for a last name that is also a common first name, like Wesley or Craig. (Names in WC are usually in this order: Lastname, Firstname.)

³ In early 2015 the list of stopwords included some English, German and French words: a, als, am, an, and, are, as, at, auf, aus, av, be, but, by, das, dass, de, der, des, det, dich, dir, du, en, er, es, et, for, fra, from, had, have, he, her, his, how, ihr, ihre, ihres, im, in, in, is, ist, it, la, le, les, mein, mich, mir, mit, mit, not, of, on, or, sein, sein, sie, that, the, this, to, un, une, von, was, wer, which, wie, wird, wird, with, you. But the list is shrinking.

So searching WC would appear to be conventional and typical of many search engines. But there are problems. WC is growing and diversifying. Although US libraries were originally the only source for WorldCat metadata, WC now receives records from many other sources including international libraries, publishers, book sellers, and database vendors. It is becoming a database of databases. This complicates searching.

As WC grows, duplicate records proliferate.

As WC grows, it declines in consistency. Because there are so many different sources of records, you can't count on a single consistent controlled vocabulary. For example, US libraries and German libraries use different conventions/standards for citing bible passages.

As WC grows, it declines in metadata quality. Some sources, especially publishers and booksellers, supply sparse metadata (author, title, source, but not subject). WC records are labeled with a database name. Don't be misled. Many vendors supply abridged metadata to WC, not the complete records used in the famous-name databases. Vendors are trying to protect sales of the unabridged databases. **Because WC records for articles often lack subject headings, you should use EBSCO, ProQuest, etc., to search specialized databases like ATLA.**

The Advanced Search Screen (Figure 100) lists databases on the right and search limiters in the lower left corner of the screen. We recommend you accept the default selections to find items at DTS. After you have executed a search, the Search Results Screen (Figure 200) will give you opportunity to refine the result set in a variety of ways based on information about the initial search results—information you don't have before the search. In the section on the Search Results Screen we discuss issues related to limiters.

WC does not offer a public browse feature; searching is the only way to lookup information.⁴ However, the staff interface does support browsing, so we expect a public browse feature eventually.

⁴ Check "Basic Concepts" (<http://library.dts.edu/basic-concepts>) if you have forgotten the distinction between browsing and searching.

The Search Results Screen

The search results page is divided into two columns. On the right, books, articles, etc. are listed. On the left, filters and limiters are available.

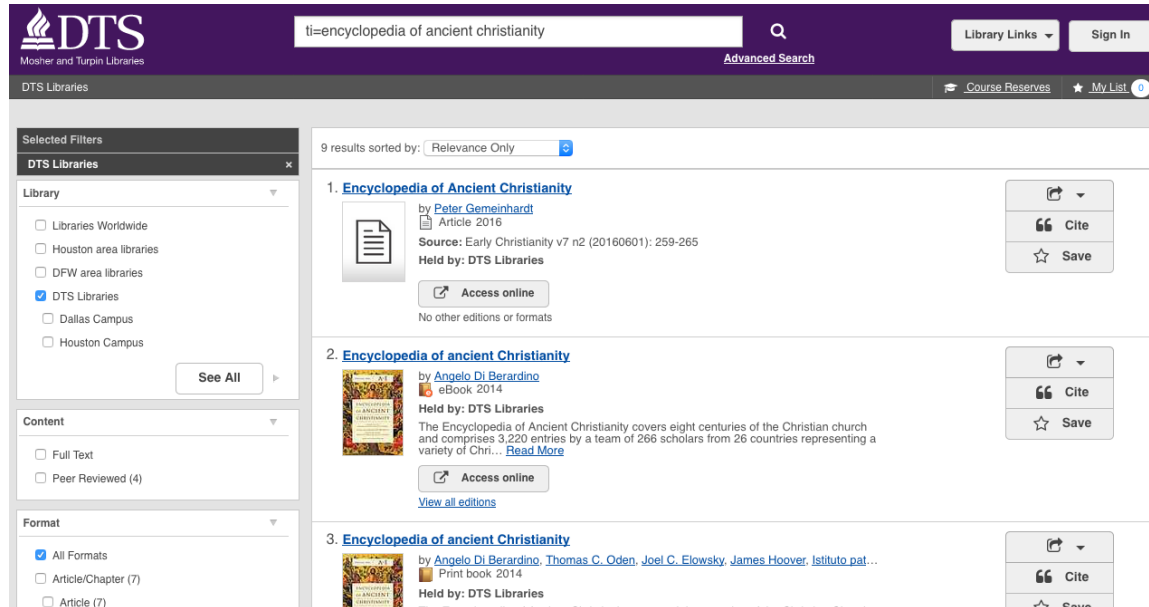
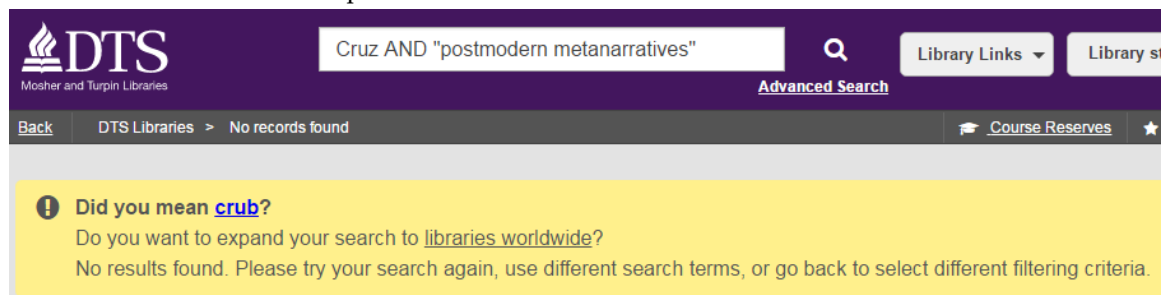


Figure 200: Search Results Screen

Concerning the Left Column of Figure 200

Filters on the left include Library, Content, Format, Databases, Author, Year, Language, and Topic. Filter categories may display an incomplete list of options; click "See All" to see the complete list of options within a category. Each filter has a default value. Change the filter settings as you wish. **As of 10/5/17, the filter settings persist for subsequent searches.** So keep a sharp eye on the Filter settings when you review your search results.

The default Library setting is to search only the holdings of "DTS Libraries." Select "Libraries Worldwide" to get much more comprehensive search results. If you search DTS Libraries for an item DTS does not own, you may see a screen that offers to expand the search to Libraries Worldwide. Here is an example.



The “Library” filter can limit results to DTS Libraries or to a specific campus. If you limit to a specific campus like Houston or DC, results will be limited to physical items stored at that campus location; there will be no indication of which online resources are available for use.

Under the Content category, the “Peer Reviewed” option will limit results to peer reviewed journal articles. Since books are not subject to peer review, selecting this option will exclude books.

Under the Databases category, selecting a particular database does not guarantee you will be searching the full metadata you would expect from that database. Some content providers supply sparse metadata (no subject headings or abstracts). Abridgement also can involve exclusion of whole records, not just portions of records. So selection of database xxx should be thought of as meaning “search abridged metadata corresponding to some large portion of database xxx.” Therefore, use EBSCO, ProQuest, etc., to search specialized databases like ATLA. OCLC is attempting to sign agreements with copyright holders so the full-text of electronic resources will eventually be searchable. If this happens, it would largely compensate for the abridged metadata.


The Topic category is based on the ARL Conspectus mapping of call numbers, and call numbers are assigned commonly to books but rarely to other formats. So if you pick any of the topics, you will be limiting the results to books (mostly). In the future the categories may be expanded to other content.

Concerning the Right Column of Figure 200

By default, results in the right column of Figure 200 (above) are ranked by relevance. The relevance ranking algorithm is in its infancy and continues to change. WorldCat presently considers the following factors.

- Where the search terms appear in the WorldCat record. Records with search terms in the title and author fields rank highest. As of Oct 2016 subject fields are not considered in ranking. So you can search for subject terms (and you should), but appearance of a term in a subject field is not considered in ranking. The problem is that WC includes sparse article records with no subjects, and fuller book records that do include subjects. What algorithm will not favor books over articles?
- Distance between search terms.
- The number of libraries that report owning the item.
- Publication date.

The right column of Figure 200 displays brief information about items. Click the title of an item to see complete information. There are three things about this brief display that are potentially misleading.

[Encyclopedia of ancient Christianity](#)
 by [Angelo Di Berardino](#), [Thomas C. Oden](#), [Joel C. Elowsky](#), [James H...](#)
 Print book 2014
 Held by: DTS Libraries
 The Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity covers eight centuries of the Christian Church and comprises 3,220 entries by a team of 266 scholars from 26 countries representing a variety of Chri... [Read More](#)
[Access online](#)
 V.1 Available Dallas Campus Reference BR66.5 .D5813 2014
[View all editions](#)

First, you may see a location and call number for an item. This is accurate but incomplete. It is just the call number for the first volume the system found. **Click the title and examine the “Availability/Holdings” accordion to see all campuses, all**

shelving locations, and all volumes. Call numbers at Dallas, Houston and Washington DC campuses are normally identical.

Second, an electronic resource will display an “Access online” link. WorldCat has clickable links to most of our ebooks and to many of our online journal articles. The links usually work as you would expect, but you may encounter the following problems.

- Some links are wrong, especially links to older public domain works.
- A small but irritating percentage of links connect to the host/parent publication, not to the specific portion. For example, a link for a journal article might take you to the whole journal. It might require a few more steps to get to the specific article.
- Some records have multiple links. Why? An item may be available from multiple sources, or each volume of a multi-volume work may have a separate link. If there are multiple links, **only the first link is activated if you click “Access online.” To see all of the links, click the title of the item.** This will take you to the Detailed Record Screen.

Third, there is the matter of record clustering. WC usually has a separate record for every variation of a work: a record for 1st edition, another record for 2nd edition, another for a translation, an ebook, a print book, an audio recording, etc. On the Search Results screen it **often shows only one record to represent the entire cluster.** OCLC attempts to pick a record for the most recent edition owned by DTS. For more details, see <https://www.oclc.org/content/dam/oclc/worldcat-discovery/Clustering-WorldCat-Discovery.pdf>.

Record clustering hides important information. For example, a search for << ti:sbl handbook of style AND yr:2014 >> displays a single record (see below). It is a record for an ebook. DTS owns both the ebook and the print book. But there is no indication on the screen that we also own the



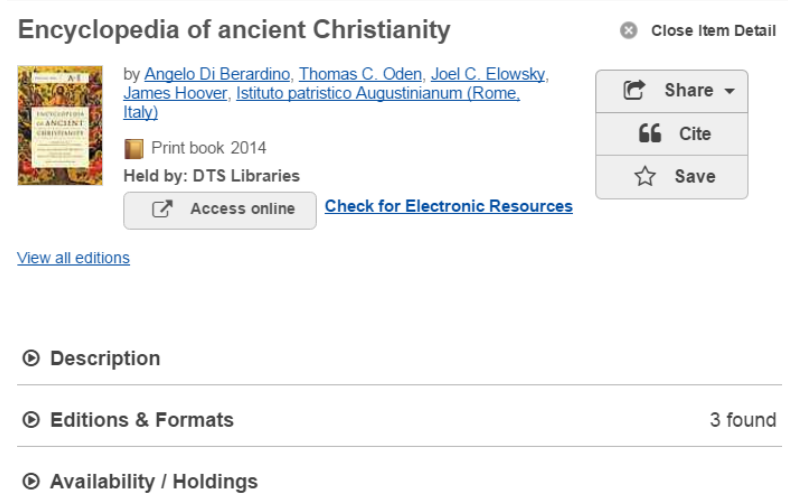
print edition. In order to see the call numbers, click “View all editions,” review the list of records and click the record for print format. OCLC is gradually improving the clustering algorithm. When we have both a print and

ebook edition, sometimes both records display on the initial search results screen. But you need to remember that **if the brief display in the Search Results Screen shows we own an electronic version, we might also own a print edition that will be visible if you click the “Editions and Formats” link.**

Note three icons adjacent the record. The top “Share” icon provides a permanent link to the record and a way to email a citation. The middle “Cite” icon provides a way to display the bibliographic information formatted according to Chicago/Turabian citation style. The formatting is not perfect. The “Cite” icon also allows you to export records to your citation management software (e.g. EndNote). The bottom “Save” icon adds the record to “My List” for subsequent emailing or exporting. Pick the “My List” menu choice at the top right corner of the screen to mail or download the list. See “Using Zotero” (<http://library.dts.edu/zotero>) for instructions on exporting WC records into Zotero.

Detail Record Screen

Click any title on the Search Results Screen to see the Detailed Record. The Detail Record Screen



hides a great deal of information in expandable accordions.

Figure 300: Detail Record Screen

The Description accordion provides detail about the item. This is where you can see subject headings. Sparse vendor-contributed records typically lack subject headings. The subject headings are

Description

Publication:	Downers Grove, Illinois : IVP Academic, [2014]
Physical	3 volumes ; 27 cm
Description:	
Language:	English
ISBN:	9780830829439 0830829431 9780830829408 0830829407 9780830829415 0830829415 9780830829422 0830829423
OCLC Number:	856977030
LCCN:	2013050987
Uniform Title:	Nuovo dizionario patristico e di antichità cristiane. English.
Contents:	volume 1. A-E -- volume 2. F-O -- volume 3. P-Z.
Subjects:	Christian literature, Early Dictionaries. Church history Primitive and early church, ca. 30-600 Dictionaries. Christian literature, Early. Church history Primitive and early church.


clickable but it is often better to copy and paste headings into the search box so you can modify the search terms before executing the next search.

Figure 310: Description

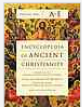
The Editions and Formats accordion lists other records grouped with the displayed record. For the example title, nine records are listed in the Editions and Formats accordion, but all seem to represent the same intellectual work. 287 libraries used the first record, and 556 used the second.

Editions & Formats 9 Found


- 1. Encyclopedia of ancient Christianity**
by [Angelo Di Berardino](#), [Thomas C. Oden](#), [Joel C. Flowsky](#), [James Hoover](#), [Istit...](#)



Print book 2014 3 volumes ; 27 cm English,
Downers Grove, Illinois : IVP Academic, [2014]
Held by: DTS Libraries and 287 Libraries Worldwide
- 2. Encyclopedia of ancient Christianity**
by [Angelo Di Berardino](#)



eBook 2014 1 online resource. English,
Downers Grove, IL : InterVarsity Press, 2014.
Held by: DTS Libraries and 556 Libraries Worldwide
- 3. Encyclopedia of ancient Christianity**
by [Angelo Di Berardino](#), [Thomas C. Oden](#), [Joel C. Flowsky](#), [James Hoover](#), [Jos...](#)



eBook 2014 1 online resource (2939 pages) English,
Downers Grove, Illinois : IVP Academic, [2014].
Held by: Houston area libraries and 20 Libraries Worldwide

At least these two records are needed (one for print version, one for online version). But why are there nine? Four records were created by booksellers, two by ebook aggregators, and three by libraries. Records 2 and 3, for example, seem to describe the same work and probably should be merged to eliminate an unnecessary duplicate record. OCLC is working on software to detect and merge duplicates.

Figure 320: Editions and Formats (Record grouping)

The Availability/Holdings accordion contains three sub-accordions.

Availability / Holdings	
Access Full Text Online	1 Link
DTS Libraries	6 available
Libraries Worldwide	308 Libraries

“Access Full Text Online” could include multiple links, and some links could be more reliable than others.

The DTS Libraries accordion lists each volume and call number. If a volume is checked-out, the system will indicate when the volume is due and will display a “Hold” button. In the image at

DTS Libraries		6 available
Holding Summary		
V.1-V.3		
Dallas Campus Reference		3 of 3 available
Call Number	Availability	
BR66.5 .D5813 2014	V.1 Available	
BR66.5 .D5813 2014	V.2 Available	
BR66.5 .D5813 2014	V.3 Available	
Houston Campus Reference		3 of 3 available
Call Number	Availability	
BR66.5 .D5813 2014	V.1 Available	
BR66.5 .D5813 2014	V.2 Available	

left, all volumes are “available;” nothing is checked-out. Volumes in a multi-volume set seem to be listed in the order they were loaded into the system, so you can’t count on volumes being sorted in the correct order. This is important when you view a periodical with scores of volumes attached.

The “Libraries Worldwide” accordion is handy for distance education students. It indicates which libraries own the item and how far they are from a reference location. You can specify the

Libraries Worldwide		308 Libraries
Search location:	3909 Swiss Avenue, , Dallas, US-TX	
Institution	Libraries	Distance
DTS Libraries	Turpin Library	0 mi Map
Southern Methodist University Library		3.18 mi Map
University of Dallas William A. Blakley Library	William A. Blakley Library	10.83 mi Map

reference location by a zip code or by an exact address. Click the “map” link to display Google maps and a route to the library. Remember from our discussion of “Figure 310: Editions and Formats” that there can be multiple records for the same work. The “Libraries

Worldwide” accordion is reporting only libraries that have used one particular record. Check all the records to see all libraries represented in WC.

Searching for Bible Passages

Bible passages present special problems. The ATLA Religion database has a dedicated Scripture Reference index to deal with the problems. To retrieve material on Matthew 4:4, just search for << SR Matthew 4:4 >>. WorldCat has no comparable index. And when we search WC we must distinguish between how to match library metadata about the Bible and how to match vendor metadata about the Bible.

US library records in WC use a consistent standardized way to cite bible passages; just search like this: << SU: bible matthew >>. Searching for a specific chapter or verse can be difficult. Chapters are designated with Roman numerals, like this: Bible Mathew VI. Sometimes a heading refers to a range of chapters or verses, like this: Bible Mathew V – VII. A search for << SU: bible matthew VI >> would not match this heading because chapter six is hidden in the reference to chapters five through seven.

Vendor records often lack subject headings and do not use a standardized way to refer to books of the Bible, so there is no reliable way to indicate the “matthew” you are searching for is the book of the Bible and not a modern author named Matthew, for example. However, a quoted search for a passage is unambiguous and may (if you are lucky) match vendor metadata. So “matthew 4:4” can succeed.

Search statement	Likely result	Correct?
SU: bible matthew	mostly library records for books	correct & recommended
KW: kingdom AND SU: bible matthew	mostly library records for books	correct & recommended
SU: bible "matthew iv 4"	mostly library records for books	correct but not recommended because very few books are written on single verse and because of the "hidden in a range of numbers" problem
KW: "matt 4:4" OR "matthew 4:4"	mostly vendor records for articles	correct but not recommended way to search for articles. Recommend use of ATLA instead
SU: "bible matthew"	nothing retrieved	incorrect because phrase operator does not cross subfield boundary

Subfields and Phrase Searching

Above we noted the search << SU: "bible matthew" >> is incorrect because the quote phrase operator can't cross subfield boundaries. Confused? Fields consist of subfields. Subfields appear in all types of subjects, not just bible entries. [Bible. Matthew V-VII Criticism, interpretation, etc.](#) has three subfields: \$a Bible, \$p Matthew, V-VII \$x Criticism, interpretation, etc. Here and below we see subfield \$p used for “part of Bible”, \$x for topic, \$y for chronology, and \$v for genre.

Subfield a	Subfield p	Other subfields	Comment
\$a Bible		\$x Publication and distribution \$x History.	About the publication of the Bible in the 20th century
\$a Bible.	\$p Old Testament	\$x Criticism, interpretation, etc. \$x History \$y 20th century.	About the history of 20th century interpretation of the Old Testament
\$a Bible.	\$p Matthew		
\$a Bible.	\$p Matthew IV, 1-11	\$x Criticism, interpretation, etc.	Note Roman numerals for chapters and Arabic numerals for verses.
\$a Bible.	\$p Matthew	\$v Commentaries.	Subject + genre (commentary). It IS a commentary ABOUT Matthew.

At present a phrase search cannot cross a subfield boundary. We hope this limitation will be removed in the future. A search for << SU: "bible matthew" >> should fail totally but will retrieve a few records that have been incorrectly coded. At present there is no way you can see subfield boundaries. (Staff can see them). What you need to know is this: if a phrase search retrieves nothing or almost nothing, consider the possibility that the search is attempting to cross a subfield boundary. Eliminate the quotes or quote less. For example, if an initial attempt of << SU:"bible Mathew v–vii" >> fails, move the quotes like this: << SU:bible "Mathew v–vii" >>, or eliminate them like this: << SU:bible Mathew v–vii >>. (The dash is converted to a space; it is not needed.)

Searching for Theses and Dissertations

Many masters theses and doctoral dissertations are included in WorldCat. You will find a Database filter and a book Format filter on the left that limit search results to theses and dissertations. However, you will have more flexibility if you do the following. Use material type code MT:deg to limit results to theses and dissertations. Use the note field (code NT) to specify the name of the degree granting institution if you wish to limit to one institution. Use the keyword field to specify the degree (e.g., PhD). So you could search for DTS DMin dissertations like this: << KW:"d.min" AND NT:"dallas theological" AND MT:deg >>.

Placing Holds

Library policy permits current faculty, students and staff to place holds on items that are checked-out or otherwise not available for immediate use. If you place a hold, the library will notify you by email when the item becomes available and will keep it for you up to a week. If a book is available in the stacks, then WC should not allow you to place a hold on it, and library staff will not retrieve the book for you from the stacks. (But we do retrieve books for distance education students.)

Availability

DTS Libraries 0 available

Place hold ⓘ

Holding Summary	
Local holdings available.	
Dallas Campus Book Stacks	0 of 1 available
Call Number	Availability
BV2063 .M47 2015	Checked Out, Due 09/21/2015

A “Place Hold” button will appear on the Availability accordion of the Detailed Record Screen if an item is holdable. Click the button. What happens at this point depends on whether you are signed-in, and on whether it is a multi-volume work. If you are not signed-in, the system will prompt you for

ID and password. If it is a single volume work then the system knows who you are and what you want, and it will attempt to place a hold immediately without any additional information from you. If it is a multi-volume work, the system will display a list of all the volumes and prompt you to specify one or more volumes to be held. When you attempt to place a hold, WC will reply by verifying the hold has been placed for you or will inform you why the hold attempt failed.

Searching for Course Reserves

Don’t confuse course reserves with holds. Course reserve is a system of sharing scarce resources.

Materials are placed on reserve at the request of an instructor when that instructor is requiring students to use those works to fulfill specific assignments in a given course. The reserve collection is not a collection of "best books," and it not intended to provide textbooks or other materials students are required to purchase. Use of course reserves has declined dramatically as instructors upload more pdfs to Canvas, the DTS online Course Management software. But course reserves are still needed for some courses. The Course Reserves button is always visible in the upper right corner of WorldCat. Clicking the Course Reserves button will take you to Figure 400.

Course Reserves

Search Course or Instructor:

[Back to Item Search](#)

390 courses sorted by: Course Name ⌵ Status: All Active

Figure 400: Reserves Search Screen

To search for a course instructor list, type one or more of the following in the search box:

- The name of the course in whole or in part
- The first and/or last name of the professor
- The name of the department, e.g. Old Testament
- The course number, two letter department code that precedes the course number, or both, e.g., << wm >> or << 101 >> or << wm 101 >>

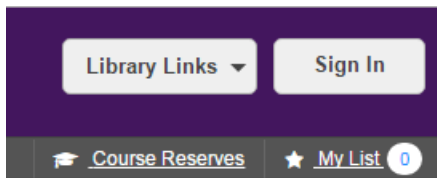
Four fields are available for sorting course reserves: Course Name, Department, Instructor, and Start Date. Choose the field you wish to sort on from the drop-down list.

Logical operators and quotation marks do not work for reserve searching. The software will “AND” words together. For example, a search for <<new testament>> will retrieve any records with “new” AND “testament.”

A search displays a list of courses. If a course has library reserve books or media items associated with it, it will say “x course materials.” Click the title of the course to see the list of associated reserves. Click the title of a reserve item to check availability. Use the browser goback button to return to the list of reserves. A record that says, “0 course materials,” means that the professor has not requested that library books or media items be placed on reserve. Click the “Temporary Materials” button to search for them. We use temporary records to circulate photocopies and some AV materials.

If you have a book title and wish to know whether that title is on reserve, look up the book in WorldCat as you would any other. Under Availability in the detailed record, it will say whether the book is in the book stacks, on reserve, or elsewhere.

Your Account and Password



Use the Sign In menu in the upper right corner of every screen to access your account. When you sign in, it will show your name. Your WorldCat account enables you to renew books, place holds, view due dates, etc. See <http://library.dts.edu/account-wc> for additional information about your account. Be sure to create a password. See “How to Create or Reset a WorldCat Password” at <http://library.dts.edu/password-wc>. You must have a working email address in your library record in order to create or reset your password.

The library uses your WC account to control access to all library databases, not just WC. For example, if you are off campus and you go to the library website and click a link to use the ATLA database, you will see the WC login screen and then be connected to ATLA. So your WC password is your all-purpose library password.

Non-English Language Issues

Menus and field labels can be displayed in several different languages including Spanish and Chinese. See the display interface options at the very bottom of any page. The interface choice does not affect what is retrieved by a search; it only affects language of menu choices and labels.

The language search limiter in the left column of the search results page (Figure 200) does limit results to works written in the selected language. However, the metadata for many journal articles lacks language codes. Records with no language code will be excluded if you limit results to a specific language.

The metadata for many non-English language books was created by English language libraries, so author and title are often in the original language but subject headings are often in English. Further, many non-English records have transliterated titles and author names rather than native script. When you are searching for a subject, use both English language terms and terms in the native script of the target language. When you are searching by author or title, use terms in the native script of the target language as well as transliterated equivalents.