

INTRODUCTION TO EBSCO DATABASES¹

By Marvin Hunn

EBSCO provides access to many databases, including the Atla Religion Database, Old Testament Abstracts, New Testament Abstracts, ERIC, Psycinfo, and others. This tutorial focuses on some basic features common to all EBSCO databases. For additional tutorials on distinctive features of specific databases, see <http://library.dts.edu/dbtutorials>.

Searching

Publications Subject Terms Cited References More ▾ Sign In Folder

Searching: **Academic Search Complete** | [Choose Databases](#)

"drug abuse" Select a Field (optional) ▾ Search Clear

AND ▾ teenager* OR adolescent* Select a Field (optional) ▾

AND ▾ treatment Select a Field (optional) ▾ + -

[Basic Search](#) [Advanced Search](#) [Search History](#) ▶

Figure 100: Advanced Search Screen

In Figure 100 we see a search for treatment of drug abuse among teens. The three concepts are separated into three search boxes. The logical operator AND, between the boxes, combines the search boxes. You can also type operators inside the boxes as in << teenager* OR adolescent* >>. Operators can be upper or lower case. Because some other search engines require operators be upper case, we suggest you always use upper case because it always works whatever the search engine. Quotation marks are used to search for an exact phrase ("drug abuse"). Terms can be grouped with parentheses like this: << "drug abuse" AND (teenager* OR adolescent*) >>.

Searching: **Academic Search Complete** | [Choose Databases](#)

"drug abuse" and (teenager* or adolescent*) Select a Field (option... ▾ Search

Figure 110: Grouped terms

"Select a Field" in Figure 110 is a drop-down list of fields which allows the searcher to specify target fields like author or subject. Two-letter field codes can be used before terms as follows to

¹ This introduction assumes that you are already familiar with "Basic Concepts for Database Searching" (<http://library.dts.edu/basic-concepts>). In this introduction, sample search statements are typographically distinguished by paired angle brackets like this: << search statement here >>.

restrict searches to specific fields: << AU Houben AND TI "resisting temptation" >>. The main field codes are AU for author, TI for title, SU for subject. Field codes must be upper case.

Commonly used operators are as follows.

Operator	Search Example	Result
AND	church AND state	AND retrieves only records containing both terms
OR	clergy OR pastor	OR retrieves records containing either term
NOT	spirit NOT holy	NOT excludes records containing the second term.
?	wom? n 17??	The question mark (?) matches any single character. Wom? n will match woman or women. 17?? could be used to match any year in the 1700's.
*	religio*	The asterisk (*) truncation operator matches 0 or more final characters. So religio* will match words beginning with the letters 'religio', including religion, religious, religiosity, etc.
N[+number]	spirit N2 filled	N (= near) specifies maximum intervening words, any word order . The example specifies a maximum distance of TWO words (N2). It matches "Spirit filled" (ZERO words apart) as well as "filled with the Spirit" (TWO words apart). N (by itself with no number) is not interpreted as an operator; you must specify a number or the system will just search for the letter n. Use zero for no intervening words: N0 .
W[+number]	infant W0 baptism	W (= within) specifies maximum intervening words, but it also specifies word order . So infant W0 baptism matches the exact phrase "infant baptism". Note W (no number) is not interpreted as an operator; you must specify a number or the system will just search for the letter w.
(...)	God AND (grace OR mercy)	In EBSCO AND combines before OR , but whatever is in parentheses combines first. Parentheses may be used to group terms together into sets and subsets. (In WorldCat AND and OR are processed left to right, neither taking precedence over the other.)
two or more words with no operator specified	youth pastor	No operator specified, so defaults to N5 operator. So << youth pastor >> is identical to << youth N5 pastor >>.
double quotation marks (" ")	"youth pastor"	Double quotation marks indicate an exact phrase like W0 .

Search Options

Search Options

Search Modes and Expanders

Search modes ?

Boolean/Phrase
 Find all my search terms
 Find any of my search terms
 SmartText Searching [Hint](#)

Apply related terms from thesaurus if available
 Also search within the full text of the items
 Apply equivalent terms from thesaurus if available

Limit your results

Full Text

Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals

Publication

Document Type

All
 Abstract
 Article
 Document Type

References Available

Published Date

Month Year: - Month Ye

Publication Type

All
 Periodical
 Newspaper
 Book

Language

All
 Afrikaans
 Arabic

Figure 200: Search options

These sections of the Advanced Search Screen (Fig. 200) allow you to limit (narrow, restrict) results by language, date of publication, etc. Different databases have different options. For the most part, the options work as you would expect. But note the following.

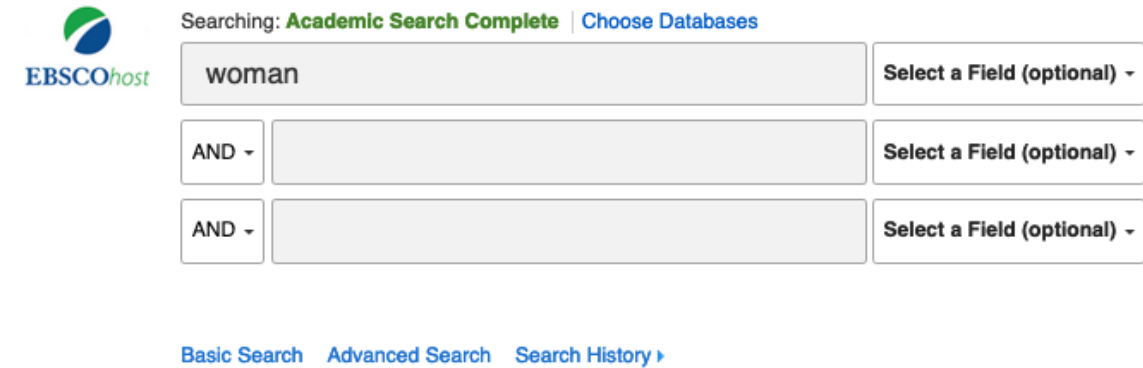
The “Apply related terms” option invisibly supplies additional related search terms including regional spellings (e.g., color, colour), acronyms, and a very limited number of synonyms. It appears the synonym list varies a little by database.

Notice there are two “Full Text” choices under Search Options. By default you search metadata. In the “Search Modes and Expanders” portion of the screen, “Also search within the Full Text of the articles” means also search all the words of the articles, not just metadata fields like title, subject, etc. This is only available for content that is stored at the EBSCO website. So this option may deliver less than you would expect. Still, if you find nothing with a regular search, try this option. In the “Limit your results” portion of the screen, “Full Text” means retrieve only articles that are stored at the EBSCO website.

Once you perform a search with limits in place, the limits will remain until you explicitly remove them or begin a new search session. Use the “Reset” button (top right of Fig. 200) to remove all options. Pressing the “Clear” button (Fig. 100, right) will not remove the limits; it only clears the terms from the search box.

Automatic Inclusion of Close Variations

When you enter a search term, the search engine automatically expands the search to match additional terms that are close variations. This does not depend on selecting the “Apply related words” option. I haven’t found complete documentation for this feature. Expansion appears to include a few very common misspellings, forms with and without accents, singular forms, plural forms, possessives, and acronyms & abbreviations.



Refine Results Search Results: 1 - 50 of 1,457,467

The system searched for an expanded version of << woman >> that includes singular, plural, and possessive. You must quote a search term to limit results to the exact word. But why would you want to limit a search to just singular or plural forms? Consider the following. A search for << hebrew >> is expanded to << “hebrew” OR “hebrews” OR “hebrew's” >>. You can and should distinguish "hebrew" language from "hebrews" (the people or the book in the NT).

Displaying Full Text Content

All EBSCO databases include metadata records, and some but not all records have links to online documents. There are many different kinds of links.

Link Says	Meaning
“PDF Full Text” or “HTML Full Text”	If the document is stored at the EBSCO website, then there is a clickable link that says “PDF Full Text” or “HTML Full Text.” Use PDF. It preserves page numbers, footnotes, exotic fonts, charts, etc.
“Linked Full Text”	If the link says “Linked Full Text,” that means the document is definitely available online from another database or website such as a publisher’s site. Click to get it.

"Check for Full Text Online"	If EBSCO does not know if the document is available online, a link that says "Check for Full Text Online" will show. The link will take you away from EBSCO to an openURL resolver and a listing of what is available and where. When you follow that link, you may have to search again for the specific article. Some information should automatically transfer from EBSCO to the search form. If the search initially fails, then you may want to edit the search by reducing the amount of information. A very detailed search will fail if any information is wrong.
Check WorldCat for Print Journal	The document, which is probably an article in a journal, may or may not be included in our print collections. Click this link to search WorldCat for the journal (not the article). It will automatically search by ISSN.
Check WorldCat for Print Book	The document, which is probably a book or a chapter in a book, may or may not be included in our print collections. Click this link to search WorldCat for the item. It will automatically search by ISBN.

Ebooks are accessed in a different manner. See <http://library.dts.edu/using-ebSCO-ebooks>.

Select Databases to Search

Note the "Choose Databases" link in Figure 300. Use this to switch from one database to another, or to search several databases simultaneously. Just click "Choose Databases," select the databases you wish to search, and click OK (Fig. 310).

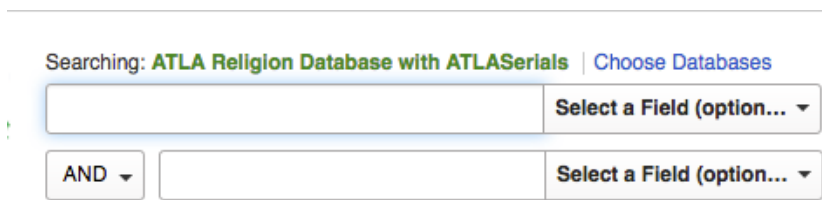


Figure 300: Choose databases link

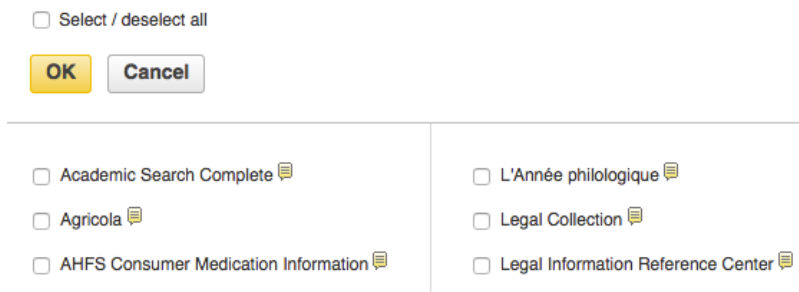


Figure 310: Select databases to search



If you search several databases simultaneously, then be aware of the following.

- EBSCO does not dedupe records.
- Databases may differ in their use of terminology, e.g., author Joseph D. Fantin in ATLA is J. D. Fantin in New Testament Abstracts. So a search that works well in one database may work poorly in another database.



Emailing, Printing, and Exporting



To email a list of articles click the folder to the right of each record you wish to send (Fig. 400). Then click “Folder View” under “Folder has items” to the right of the list of results at the top of the page. The “Folder has items” box will only show up to three items even if you choose four or more, but the others are still chosen.

Search Results: 1 - 50 of 323 Relevance ▾ Page Options ▾ Share ▾

1. **The Covenant of Redemption According to John Owen and Patrick Gillespie**  



By: Bird, Benedict. Source: Foundations (Affinity), 70 Spr 2016, p 5-30. Publication Type: Article
Subjects: Owen, John, 1616-1683; Gillespie, Patrick, 1617-1675; Theology, Reformed; Covenant theology; Redemption -- Christianity -- History of doctrines -- 1600-1699; Trinity -- History of doctrines -- 1600-1699; Grace -- History of doctrines -- 1600-1699; Open access

 [PDF Full Text](#)  [Send PDF to my Cloud](#)

2. **The light of grace: John Owen on the authority of scripture and Christian faith**  

Publication Type: Book
Subjects: Owen, John, 1616-1683; Reformed/Calvinist Churches; Systematic Theology, Christian--1500-1699; Biblical Hermeneutics



[Check for Full Text Online.](#)

3. **John Owen, Richard Baxter and the formation of nonconformity**  

By: Kerr, Jason A. Source: Anglican and Episcopal History, 85 no 1 Mar 2016, p 126-128. Publication Type: Review
Subjects: Peer reviewed

[Check for Full Text Online.](#) [Check WorldCat for Print Journal](#)

Folder has items

-  John Owen, Richard Baxter...
-  The Covenant of Redemptio...

Go to: [Folder View](#)

Figure 400: Choosing records #1 and #3

Clicking “Folder View” will take you to a screen that lists the records you chose and allows you to print, email, or export them. The Print option prints a bibliography together with links to the records. The Email option allows you to email the list of records you chose as well as the Full Text of any item attached to a record in the list (Fig. 410). If you choose, for example, 10 records and 8 of them have an attached PDF, you will receive 9 emails—one for each PDF and one that lists all the records you chose. Any HTML text will be included in the email containing the list.

Figure 410: Email options for EBSCO records

The Export option allows you to export records to various bibliographic databases, including Zotero and EndNote. See the [Zotero guide](#) for details about how to save individual records into a Zotero library without the EBSCO exporting function.

Browsing

In EBSCO, browse as follows. First pick the “Indexes” menu button (Fig. 500).

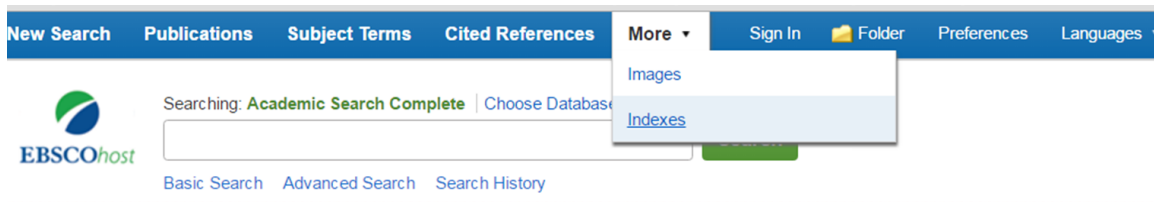


Figure 500: Pick Indexes to browse

EBSCO uses the browse feature to help you select terms for a search. The selected terms are inserted into the search box to execute a normal search. So when you pick “Indexes” an empty Browse panel will appear below the search box. Both search and browse will be on the screen at the same time. See Figure 510.

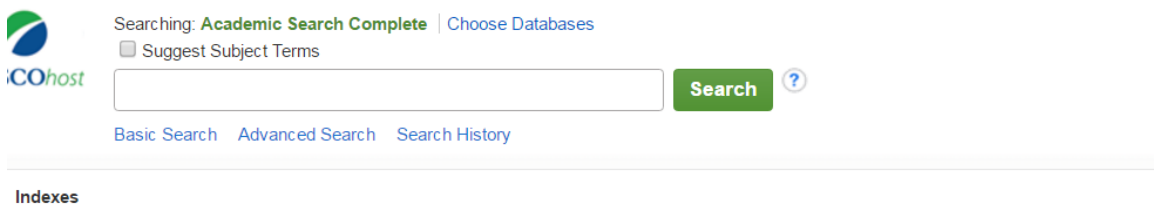


Figure 510: Initial (empty) Browse Screen

Figure 510: Initial (empty) Browse Screen

Select a field from the drop-down list to browse. In Figure 520 we select “Author.” To browse a person’s name, enter last name first. So we enter “Smith, John D” and click “browse.”

Browse an Index:

Browse for:


Page: [◀ Previous](#) | [Next ▶](#)

Select one or more terms and add to search using:

Term	Records Count
<input type="checkbox"/> smith, john d	1
<input type="checkbox"/> smith, john d.	36
<input type="checkbox"/> smith, john damien	2
<input type="checkbox"/> smith, john david	120

Figure 520: Browse for author Smith, John D.

A sorted list of headings appears. Check off the headings of interest and click the “Add” button to add those terms to the normal search box (Fig. 530).



Searching: **Academic Search Complete** | [Choose Databases](#)

[?](#)

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Indexes

Browse an Index:

Browse for:

Page: [◀ Previous](#) | [Next ▶](#)

Select one or more terms and add to search using:

Term	Records Count
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> smith, john d	1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> smith, john d.	36
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> smith, john damien	2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> smith, john david	120

Figure 530: Browse headings inserted into search box

Then click the “Search” button to actually execute a search using those headings.

Each database has its own drop-down list of browseable fields. Many fields only appear in a certain class of databases. For example, stock market ticker symbol is a field in some business databases. Author and Subject appear in nearly every database. But index names don’t always mean

the same thing. For example, in Academic Search the subject index does not include everything you would think of as a subject. It does not include personal names used as a subject (e.g. articles about a person) and it does not include bible passages. In Academic Search the “Headings” index includes everything. In the Atla Religion database, however, the subject index does include everything you would think of as a subject, and there is no index called “Headings.”

You do not need to memorize such differences between databases. Just remember this one thing: if you are browsing a particular index in an EBSCO database and what you are looking for does not appear, then try a different index.

Many EBSCO databases use specialized discipline-specific terms. For example, Atla (religion), ERIC (education) and Psycinfo (psychology) all use their own subject headings. They don’t use the same words to refer to the same things. Browsing can help you discover useful terminology that matches the conventions of a specific database.

You can only browse one database at a time. But you can search multiple databases simultaneously. For example, if you use the database searchbox on the library home page then you are searching nine databases at one time. Often students use the home page searchbox for a search, then attempt to browse, and are confused by the complex multi-database browse menu. Compare Figures 500 and 550.

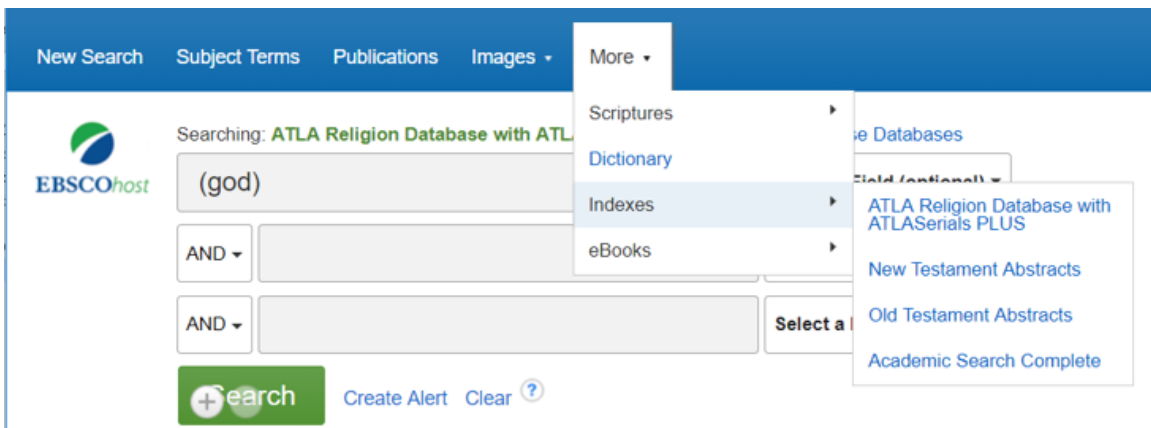


Figure 550: Pick Indexes to browse, multiple databases.

Use “Choose Databases” to select just the one database you wish to browse.

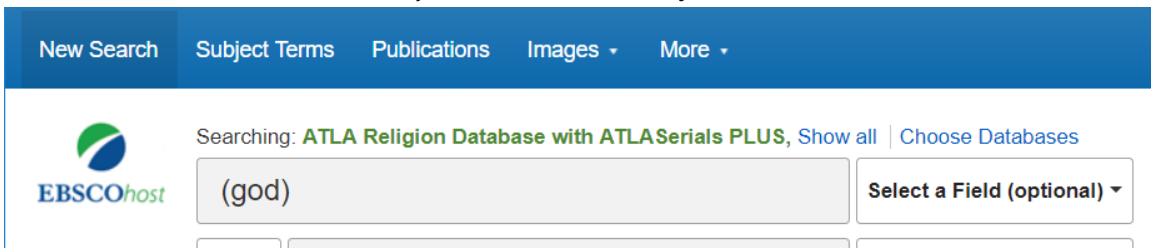


Figure 555: Choose Databases link

Other Features

This brief intro should be enough to get you started with EBSCO databases, but there is more to learn. For example, it is possible to store a search statement that will automatically execute once a month and email results to you. This is a great way to stay current on a topic of continuing interest. The “Smart-text” feature lets you search without using operators. Some databases have special features. For example, the EBSCO ebook database allows you to download ebooks to a tablet or ebook reader, but a personal account and a special procedure is required. So find the time to read about other features.