

Many academic libraries these days have a global search tool. This tool is similar to Google Scholar, but it's specifically designed to access library resources. It conveniently searches across dozens of research databases and the library catalog all at once. Using Global Search can be a little tricky because it's a rather complex system. But there are some useful tips you can learn to search effectively. Let's take a look.

Ahmed has carefully thought about his search strategy and entered this search: Europe AND (refugees or asylum seekers) AND (healthcare or medicine).

He used a carefully thought-out search strategy, so he got a pretty good list of results. However, there were so many! He felt a bit overwhelmed.

He wondered how to narrow down these results to find the best ones. And he was also confused about the many different links for getting the full text.

One of the first things to know is that most library databases are paid for by CEU Library and not open to the world. So Ahmed needed to make sure he was logged in to the CEU VPN service in order to get full access to articles. Luckily, he had already set up his AnyConnect VPN account, so he logged in.

Next, Ahmed wondered about all the different links to full text under each result. Some of them said "Full text option(s)." Others said "Full text in JSTOR" or full text in some other databases.

He wondered which ones to click on first. Since Global Search is a complex system bringing together information from many disparate sources, the best approach is to just try any of the full text links until you get to articles that are useful to you.

If there is no full text, Ahmed could use CEU Library's Interlibrary Loan service to request the item from another library.

Now let's talk about narrowing your search. Ahmed noticed that on the left side of the results page there were many options under Refine Results.

Some of the most useful options were listed under "Limit To." Ahmed checked "full text" and the number of results went down by almost 700.

You might wonder.... isn't everything full text? Not really. That's because some databases only contain citations to articles. So those results would not have full text, just a citation. Ahmed didn't want to wait to order articles from other libraries using interlibrary loan, so he focused on the ones that he could download immediately.

Next Ahmed noticed the Publication Date filter. For his topic he was interested mainly in more recent articles, so he changed the range to 2015 to the current year. After moving his cursor out of the date box, the results filtered down to 821. A much better set of results! But still too many to go through one-by-one.

Then he noticed the checkbox for Scholarly (Peer-Reviewed) Journals. For this research paper, he didn't need to use newspapers or popular magazines, though you might want to for some other topics. So he checked the box and his results set went down to 616. Good.

Another useful feature is narrowing by Subject. Ahmed checked the boxes for "refugees" and "health services accessibility." With each checkbox, his results became more focused on the topics he wanted. You could try various options to get the results that are most useful to you. Ahmed found articles that were exactly what he was looking for.

There are many other useful ways to refine your results, such as Language, Geography, and more. You can experiment with these get the most relevant results. You might even decide to change the focus of your topic based on results that you found.

So remember, in addition to using a well-thought-out search strategy, these methods can help you narrow your results to articles that are relevant and useful for your topic.

Happy searching!