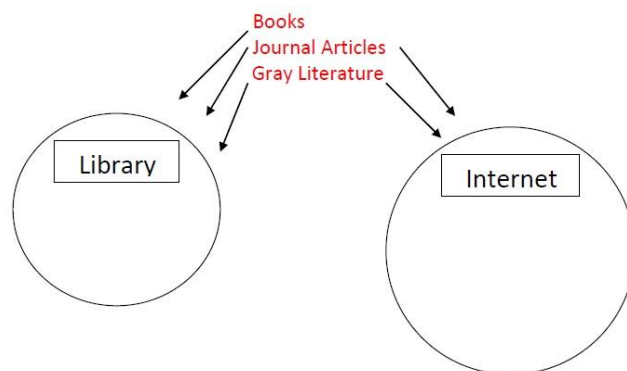


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**Note:** This Guide primarily covers search strategies. **Specific Information on using library and internet search engines is available in a companion Guide: "Scholarly Information Search: Finding Books, Journal Articles and Other Sources."** This companion Guide can be obtained from D. Schwieder at the email address listed above.

## Scholarly Information Search: Overview and Strategies

This guide outlines a simple approach that you can use to find scholarly sources like books and journal articles, among others. This approach works for virtually *any* type of scholarly resource, on virtually *any* topic, on the internet or in the UF library.



This information searching approach has two parts:

- 1) **Good Search Terms**
- 2) **Effective Search Limiters**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Many types of library materials are now online in electronic form. This includes e-books, theses and dissertations, and virtually all journal articles. You can access these directly when you are on campus, but to access these materials from off-campus, you will have to log into the UF computer network. To do so, go to the Library home page, [www.uflib.ufl.edu](http://www.uflib.ufl.edu) and put your cursor over "Using the Libraries," then click "Off-Campus access."

On the right, you will see a download link for the UF Virtual Private Network (VPN), a program that will allow you to connect with the UF network and the UF Libraries. You will have to download a small piece of software, and install it on your computer (much like doing this with Adobe Acrobat Reader or Flash).

## **Part 1: Use Good Search Terms**

**A good search term is one that matches the actual words or phrases that are used by the scholarly literature on your topic.**

You will get the best results if your search terms **exactly match** the terms that are used in scholarly publications like books and journal articles.

### **Example: Finding Sources on Voting**

We'll start with an example. Let's say you want to find scholarly books and articles focusing on **voting**—that is, **on people voting in an election**.

### **Coming Up With Good Search Terms**

When you're starting to search, you usually won't be familiar with the relevant scholarly terms, and you'll probably have only a vague idea of how to phrase what you're searching for. **Fortunately, coming up with good search terms is usually pretty easy. You can do this by starting with what you do know, and by paying close attention to the search engines you use and the search results you get.**

### ***Good Search Terms – Strategy 1: Watch for Good Search Terms Provided by your Search Engine***

Let's start with Google. Go to Google, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and start by typing in the best search term you can come up with, off the top of your head.

Say you start by typing in “voter” or “voting.” You will see what Google and Google Scholar call “auto-completions.” These are the phrases that show up right below where you are typing.



- Q voter
- Q voter registration
- Q voter registration texas
- Q voter registration card
- Q voter suppression
- Q voter registration georgia
- Q voter id laws
- Q voter registration deadline
- Q voter registration nc
- Q voter turnout 2016

As you can see, when we type “voter,” one of the auto completions shows “voter turnout.” **As it turns out, voter turnout is the correct term—the one most commonly used by political scholars.** While you wouldn’t necessarily know this is the correct term, you could search with this term, and quickly see that this is the case.

Google and Google Scholar will also provide additional search terms, listed at the bottom of the Google page showing your search results:

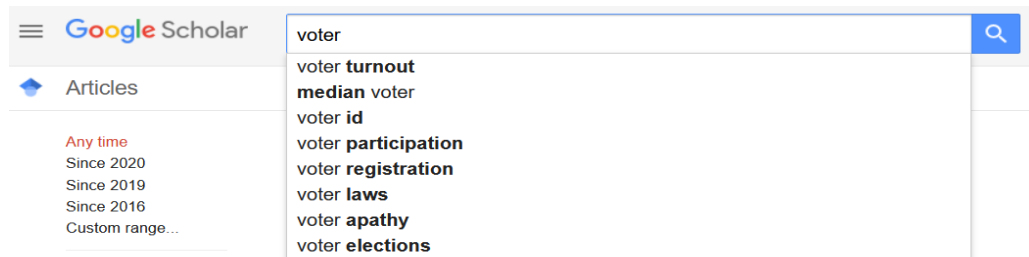
#### Searches related to voter

voter <b>registration</b>	voter <b>registration card</b>
voter <b>registration texas</b>	voter <b>registration lookup</b>
<b>check</b> voter <b>registration</b>	<b>change</b> voter <b>registration</b>
<b>sos</b> voter <b>registration</b>	voter <b>classification</b>

Here we don’t see “voter turnout,” but these additional search terms are still a good thing to look at—sometimes the term you want will show up here.

These autocomplete and additional search terms are not guaranteed to be better than your own search terms. (They are based on previous searches by others, and so the quality depends on the skills of the previous searchers.) But they often are helpful, or at least they may be useful in suggesting new search terms or new ways to think about your search terms.

Autocompletions are also provided by a number of other search engines. Google Scholar will also do this:

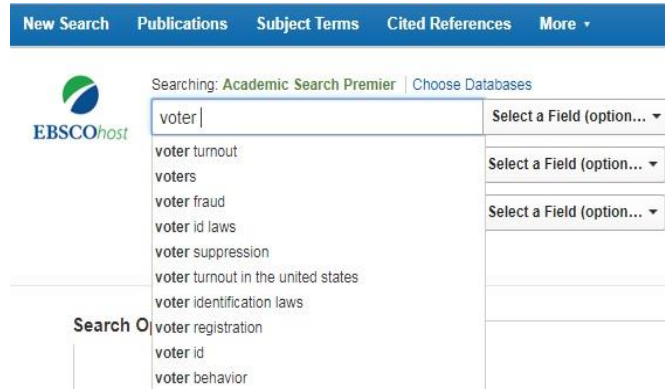


(If you’re not familiar with Scholar, it’s Google’s academic search engine. It is available at: [www.google.com/scholar](http://www.google.com/scholar) More information on using Scholar is available in the companion Search Guide.)

(Continued)

Some library search engines will also do autocompletions.

For example, here we see Academic Search Premier, which is a journal article search engine:



To access Academic Search Premier, go to the library home page, [www.uflib.ufl.edu](http://www.uflib.ufl.edu), then **put your cursor over** “Find.” Then click “Databases” then click “Project Starter Databases.” You should now see the link for Academic Search Premier. (You may have to scroll down a bit to see this link.)

Search engines like Google Scholar and Academic Search Premier will often give **better** autocompletions than basic Google, because they are specialized scholarly search engines. So you may want to use them to identify good search terms.

### ***Good Search Terms – Strategy 2: Watch for Good Search Terms in Your Search “Hits”***

The sources, or “hits” produced by your search may include useful search terms. Here is an example that we got by typing “voter” into Google:

#### **Television and Voter Turnout - Matthew Gentzkow**

I argue that substitution away from other media with more political coverage provides a plausible mechanism linking **television** to **voting**. As evidence for this, I ...

by M GENTZKOW - 2006 - [Cited by 716](#) - [Related articles](#)

Here we see “voter turnout” in the title.

Similarly, here is an example of a search result using ProQuest, another journal article search engine in the UF Libraries. Once again, the word “turnout” is very obvious.



Scholarly  
Journals

Information effect on voter turnout: How campaign spending mobilises voters  
Siim Trumm; Sudulich, Laura; Townsley, Joshua. *Acta Politica*; London Vol. 52, Iss. 4, (Oct 2017): 461-478.

...as a provider of electoral information on the one hand, and voter turnout on the...  
...turnout. We find evidence that campaign effort mobilises voters and has a...  
...voter turnout; this effect is independent from, and unconditioned by, the...

[Abstract/Details](#) [Full text - PDF \(224 KB\)](#) [References \(45\)](#)

To access ProQuest, go to the library home page, [www.uflib.ufl.edu](http://www.uflib.ufl.edu) then put your cursor over “Find.” Then click “Databases” then click “Project Starter Databases.” You will probably have to scroll down a bit to see the ProQuest link.

### **Good Search Terms -- Strategy 3: Watch for Good Search Terms in the Sources that you find**

Whichever kind of search engine you use—Google, Google Scholar, or a search engine from the library—you should also take a good look at—that is, actually skim--the sources that you find. Often, these will also suggest good search terms.

Here we can see this in a journal article that was discovered during this search. Although the title of this article focuses on political participation (a broader term) you can see that voter turnout is mentioned in the abstract (on the fifth line down).

American Political Science Review

Vol. 102, No. 2 May 2008

doi:10.1017/S0003055408080209

#### **Genetic Variation in Political Participation**

JAMES H. FOWLER *University of California, San Diego*

LAURA A. BAKER *University of Southern California*

CHRISTOPHER T. DAWES *University of California, San Diego*

*The decision to vote has puzzled scholars for decades. Theoretical models predict little or no variation in participation in large population elections and empirical models have typically accounted for only a relatively small portion of individual-level variance in turnout behavior. However, these models have not considered the hypothesis that part of the variation in voting behavior can be attributed to genetic effects. Matching public voter turnout records in Los Angeles to a twin registry, we study the heritability of political behavior in monozygotic and dizygotic twins. The results show that a significant proportion of the variation in voting turnout can be accounted for by genes. We also replicate these results with data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health and show that they extend to a broad class of acts of political participation. These are the first findings to suggest that humans exhibit genetic variation in their tendency to participate in political activities.*

## **Part 2: Use Search Limiters**

Search terms are the most basic part of scholarly search—obviously, you can’t do a search without typing something into the search box. **But search limiters are equally important.**

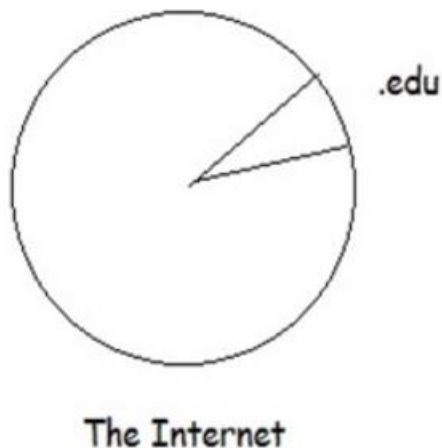
Search limiters function as their name suggests—they serve to limit your search, that is, to narrow the range of results that you will get. Once you have come up with a good search term (Step 1) they can help to narrow and focus your search (Step 2).

## Google Search Limiters

### Site Limiters

Site limiters limit your Google search to particular parts of the internet. The most useful limiters involve **top level domains** on the internet. These include the educational domain (.edu) which consists almost entirely of colleges and university websites, and the government domain (.gov) which usually finds U.S. government resources, and so on.

The logic behind limiters can be easily shown with this pie chart-like diagram:



As you can see, limiting your search to the small slice of the internet made up of college and university websites (.edu sites) will tend to give you “hits” from sites that are more academic and scholarly than you will get from a general Google search.

**Google search syntax:** voter turnout site:.edu

There are a number of other top level domains that also are useful, including .gov (for government sites) and “country codes” which allow you to search for sources from other countries. A large list of these domains can be found at:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Internet\\_top-level\\_domains](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Internet_top-level_domains)

You can also use more specific site limiters, which limit your results to particular website ranges, for example:

**Google search syntax:** voter turnout site:.ufl.edu voter turnout site:.duke.edu

**Google search syntax:** voter turnout site:.whitehouse.gov voter turnout site:.senate.gov

### The File Type Limiter

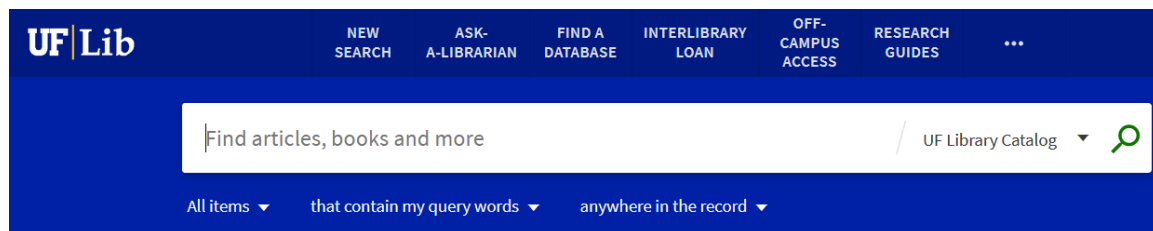
A file type limiter works like it sounds: it limits your Google results to certain kinds of computer files. The most useful file type limiter involves Adobe Acrobat .pdf files. Most academic documents are written in some kind of file (as opposed to the .html language that is used for web pages) and .pdf files have effectively become the “default” for these documents. To use a .pdf file type limiter just add this to your existing search term:

**Google search syntax:** voter turnout site:.edu filetype:pdf

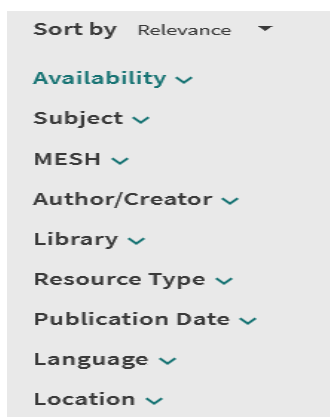
### Library Search Engine Limiters

Unlike Google--where you usually just type the limiters following your search term--using search limiters in library products usually involves checking boxes or clicking a link.

Let’s say you wanted to search for **books** in the library. For most library search engines, like the UF Library Catalog (shown here)...



... the limiters will be **on the left side of the screen**. (Note: These limiters will only appear **after** you have done a search.)



To access the Library Catalog, go to the library home page, [www.uflib.ufl.edu](http://www.uflib.ufl.edu) then **put your cursor over** “Find.” Then click “Books” then click “Library Catalog.”

Limiting by **publication date** can be very useful. This will allow you to get only recent books. You can also limit by Resource Type (books, videos and so on) or by language (English, German, etc.). These tend to be the most useful, but as you can see, other limiters also are available.

You can also use limiters with the library's **journal article** databases. Here are some of the limiters in the Academic Search Premier database:

Limit To

Full Text

References Available

Peer Reviewed

From: 1897 To: 2022

Publication Date

Show More

**Note:** These limiters will appear on the **left** after you do a search. Before you do a search, they will appear at the **bottom** of the screen.

To use these search engine limiters, just check or click the most useful ones, or use the “slider” to pick your dates.

To access Academic Search Premier, go to the library home page, [www.uflib.ufl.edu](http://www.uflib.ufl.edu) then **put your cursor** over “Find.” Then click “Databases” then click “Project Starter Databases.” You should now see the link for Academic Search Premier. (you may have to scroll down a bit to see this link.)

Finally, here are limiters from the ProQuest database, which work much the same:

Relevance Sort

Narrow results

Full text

Peer reviewed

Source type

Newspapers (330,173)

Wire Feeds (59,542)

Historical Newspapers (28,771)

Dissertations & Theses (18,248)

Scholarly Journals (16,872)

More options...

Publication date

1807 - 2017 (decades)

To access ProQuest, go to the library home page, [www.uflib.ufl.edu](http://www.uflib.ufl.edu) then **put your cursor over** “Find.” Then click “Databases” then click “Project Starter Databases.” If you scroll down a bit you should now see the link for ProQuest.)



## **Conclusion: Good Search Terms and Effective Search Limiters—Working Together**

As you learn to become an effective searcher, you will probably tend to see good search terms and effective search limiters as two separate elements. But once you get more experienced with searching, you will realize that they **work together**, and that combining them in useful ways is necessary to obtain the best search results.