INFORMATION SOURCES
The Research Process
1. Analyse your topic

- What is the question asking you and what do you already know about the topic?

- Consider the scope of the information you require?

- What area or field is the research being conducted in?

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2. Developing a research strategy

1. Identify the main concepts or keywords

2. Compile a list of alternative terms

3. Use truncation

4. Combine with boolean to form a search expression

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2.1 Identify the main concepts or keywords

- You will need to think about your research topic and identify the key concepts.

- Example

- How does inequality affect educational outcomes?

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2.2 Compile a list of alternative terms

- Searching for information will often involve searching different combinations of terms.

Concept 1: Inequality

Concept 2: Education

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2.2 Compile a list of alternative terms

- Alternative terminology
- Alternative spelling
- Plurals
- Abbreviations

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2.3 Use truncation

- To broaden your search you may wish to substitute variant endings on a term with an asterisk: *.

- Example

  - Learn* = learn, learns, learning, learner.
2.4 Combine with boolean to form a search expression

- Unlike Google, most databases require you to connect keywords or phrases with "boolean operators".

- The boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT can be used to broaden and narrow your search.

- **AND**: finds records that contains all the words specified.

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2.4 Combine with boolean to form a search expression

- **OR**: finds records that contain either or both of the words specified.

- Example: **online learning** OR **distance education** retrieves records that contain either online learning or distance education.

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2.4 Combine with boolean to form a search expression

- **NOT**: finds records with the first of the two terms but not the second.

- Example: online learning **NOT** distance education retrieves records with online learning, but excludes those records containing distance education.

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3. Identify information sources
Information sources

- Books
- Popular/Special Interest Magazine
- Websites
- Academic Journals
- Professional/Trade Magazines
- Newspapers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best For:</th>
<th>The Information:</th>
<th>Watch For:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Comprehensive information about the topic</td>
<td>• Often places an event into some sort of historical context</td>
<td>• Dated information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Background and historical information</td>
<td>• Can provide broad overviews of an event</td>
<td>• Content level can range from general public to expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bibliography of other sources</td>
<td>• Can be intended for a broad audience depending on the book, ranging from scholars to a general audience</td>
<td>• Bias or slant (dependent on author)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/selectingsources.html](http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/selectingsources.html)
Scholarly/Academic Journals

Best For:
- In depth information
- Articles written by experts
- Charts and graphs
- Recent research on a topic
- Bibliographies of other sources

The Information
- Is often theoretical, carefully analyzing the impact of an event on society, culture and public policy
- Is peer-reviewed
- Often narrow in topic
- Is intended for other scholars, researchers, professionals and university students in the field

Watch For:
- Terminology and depth of articles may be difficult to understand by novices
- Dated information (sort your results by date if you are looking for the most recent information, as some journals extend back several decades)

http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/selectingsources.html
Examples

- Journal of Applied Economics
- Econometrica
- The Quarterly Journal of Economics
- The Historian
- Journal of the American Medical Association
- Lancet
## Popular/Special Interest Magazine

### Best For:
- Current information
- Shorter, easy to understand articles
- Photographs and illustrations

### The Information:
- Is contained in long-form stories. Weekly magazines begin to discuss the impact of an event on society, culture and public policy
- Can include detailed analysis of events, interviews, as well as opinions and analysis
- Offers perspectives of an event from particular groups or geared toward specific audiences
- Is intended for a general audience or specific non-professional groups

### Watch For:
- Authors are usually not experts
- Articles can lack depth
- Sources not always cited
- Editorial bias of a publication

[http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/selectingsources.html](http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/selectingsources.html)
Professional/Trade Magazines

**Best For:**
- Specialized information related to a particular discipline or profession
- Current information
- Some bibliographies

**The Information:**
- Is contained in long-form articles or reports
- May provide context and analysis of an event as it relates to a specific interest group
- Is intended for professional organizations or groups with similar interests

**Watch For:**
- Article length can vary between short, easy to understand to lengthy and highly specific
- Sources not always cited
- Characteristics similar to both popular and scholarly sources sometimes make it difficult to recognize source type

http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/selectingsources.html
# Newspapers

## Best For:
- Daily information
- Localized information and events
- Beginning to apply chronology to an event and explain why the event occurred

## The Information
- May include statistics, photographs and editorial coverage
- Includes quotes from experts, government officials, witnesses, etc.
- Is intended for a general audience

## Watch For:
- Authors usually not experts

[http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/selectingsources.html](http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/selectingsources.html)
# Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best For:</th>
<th>The Information:</th>
<th>Watch For:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Government information</td>
<td>• Is primarily provided through resources like Internet news sites when related to a specific event</td>
<td>• Credibility and accuracy cannot be assured (check for author credentials, publication date, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Varied points of view on a topic</td>
<td>• Explains the who, what, when and where of an event</td>
<td>• Information may be highly biased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Statistics</td>
<td>• Is intended for a general audience</td>
<td>• Sources not always cited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Company information</td>
<td></td>
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Resources for Economists on the Internet

- http://www.lse.ac.uk/economics/sitemap/economics/Resources.aspx
- http://www.rfe.org/
Databases
What is an online database?

- Indexes of academic articles and other materials in specific fields
- Individual online periodicals (journals, magazines, or newspapers) or e-books
- Collections of online periodicals or e-books
- Archives of older journals, newspapers, or books which have been scanned

http://guides.library.ucla.edu/databases
What is an online database?

- Indexes or collections of dissertations, government documents, technical reports, standards, or other specialized content types

- Indexes or collections of statistical data, maps, images, music, video, or other non-text materials

- Citation indexes, which track who cited specific articles and books

scanned http://guides.library.ucla.edu/databases
Types of online databases

- There are two main types of database.

- ‘Fulltext’ databases provide the complete journal article to read online, while ‘bibliographic’ databases only provide references and abstracts (summaries).

- You can either search or browse both types of database.

- Politécnica subscribes to several online databases which you can find through Biblioteca.
Watch for:

- When you want to find articles on your topic in magazines, journals or newspapers
You can use an online database to search for up-to-the-minute published material on the subject of your assignment.

It is much easier to use an online database to search lots of journals simultaneously for articles on a topic than to search through journals individually.

You can find thousands of references and articles from your PC.
Why should I use an online database?

- Material accessed through the University’s subscribed databases tends to be more academically reliable than references discovered via Google.

- Knowing how to use online databases to locate relevant information is an important information skill.

- Developing such skills will not only help you with your studies but will also look good in your personal development profile.
Choose the right database(s)

- Learn about the major features of databases you should look for when selecting a

- What Subject Area(s) Does It Cover?

- What Types of Material Does It Cover?
Using Multidisciplinary Databases
www.epn.edu.ec

Biblioteca
5. Evaluating information

- It is important to critically evaluate the resources you consult during your research no matter what the format.

- Information needs to be checked for reliability and validity.

- You might wish to consider a number of criteria when evaluating these information sources:

  [scanned](http://guides.library.ucla.edu/databases)
5. Evaluating information: Authority

☐ Is the book publisher a university press or a major commercial publisher? Has the book been reviewed?

☐ Has the journal article been published in a peer-reviewed or scholarly journal or is was it published in a magazine?
5. Evaluating information: Accuracy

- Is it consistent with other accounts?
- Does it provide evidence and come to appropriate conclusions?
- Does the work provide citations?
- Does the author use sources accurately?
- Is the bibliography sufficient, consistent and appropriate?
5. Evaluating information: Currency and Purpose

- Is currency important to the topic?
- When was the information published?
- What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, persuade, report research or present opinion?
- Has there been any reaction to the author’s argument?

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5. Evaluating information: Coverage and Intended audience

- Is the information relevant to your topic?

- Is the information intended to be comprehensive or specialized?

- Who is the intended audience?
Evaluating journal articles

- http://ip-science.thomsonreuters.com/mjl/
Resources for Economists on the Internet

- http://www.lse.ac.uk/economics/siteMap/economics/Resources.aspx

- http://www.rfe.org/
References

University Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

http://rmit.libguides.com/c.php?g=335973&p=2263995

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