



Searching for the Evidence: An Introduction to Social Science Information Retrieval

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SEARCHING FOR THE EVIDENCE: AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL SCIENCE INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

The purpose of the User Guide

This guide aims to serve as an introduction to a number of databases in the social science field with emphasis on several specialised databases that include coverage of grey literature. The guide also provides an overview of the search tools available to researchers and policy makers during the course of performing a database search.

In particular this User Guide:

- Highlights a number of specialised databases that can be useful in researching topics associated with the social sciences. A summary of each database, which includes information such as subject coverage, availability of full text references and frequency of updates is provided.
- Provides guidance on search tools including Boolean operators, truncation and wildcards, used to form more complex search queries, with the aim of guiding researchers and policy makers towards more comprehensive, accurate and fruitful search results.

In social sciences a number of factors make the retrieval of useful information more difficult compared to, for example, medical literature. Key differences between these two fields include¹:

- Less of a 'profession-based' focus (as compared to medicine)
- Diversity and quality of available literature;
- Variety of databases;

¹ For a more detailed discussion see *A Difficult Business: Finding the Evidence for Social Science Reviews*, Grayson G and Gomersall G, (2003), ESRC UK Centre for Evidence Based Policy and Practice: Working Paper 19.

- Variability of bibliographic tools;
- Differences in the amount of material on the internet;
- Variability of terminology;
- Dubious quality of a range of information;

An important feature of databases is the distinction between those that are purely academic and those databases that are specialised, providing coverage of both academic *and* "grey" literature². Examples of this latter group of materials include working papers, research reports, Government papers and reports and conference proceedings.

Grey literature has its own set of advantages and disadvantages, but perhaps most notable of its benefits is its up to date status, especially when compared to journal articles and other academic documents which are likely to be subject to lengthy peer (quality) review and editing. This is an important feature, as policy research often needs to take account of the most current references available as well as older material.

² Specialised databases are one means of providing "grey" literature, with the other method of access being direct acquisition from the institutes, departments or associations responsible for producing the material. For a discussion of definitions see <http://library.brooklyn.cuny.edu/access/greyliter.htm>

Overview

Part I of the Guide outlines some common search operators used in searching Social Science databases. It must be noted that this section aims to serve as a guide to the particular operators discussed and the information provided cannot be generalised to all databases as **different databases use different conventions**.

Searchers may need to familiarise themselves with the conventions particular to the databases they are searching by accessing the relevant Help or Guidance pages. These pages will outline the search operators specific to the database and should therefore prevent the researcher applying irrelevant search operators. Where applicable, web addresses for these Help pages are provided for the databases discussed in this User Guide.

This section also discusses some general search techniques.

Part II provides information on several specialised and two academic databases that DCMS-based searchers may find useful for informational retrieval. For each database various aspects are outlined including:

- Access Information
- Subject Coverage
- Search Operators
- Dates Covered

Table 1 on pages 16/17 summarises key features of these databases to allow easier comparison.

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I. Database search strategies

(i) The search

The first step in the database search process is to construct a search plan beginning with the identification of relevant terms and concepts. It is also useful to search under different combinations of terms to try and capture as many useful references as possible. The researcher may find it helpful to use a basic search for this initial work in order to gauge the reference material available through the database being searched, and hence the usefulness of the database for their particular research topic.

The second step in a search strategy involves performing the actual search itself and reviewing subsequent search results to revise the search statement as necessary. During this second important step, depending on the results of the initial search, the researcher will need to use a more complex search query to cut down the amount of irrelevant results in the case of too many 'hits' or adjust the search statement in the case of too few or lack of 'hits'.

Adopting a methodical approach during the search process and recording search statements as the search progresses is likely to prevent confusion and ensures that the process is more efficient. Some databases will allow search results to be saved and some such as the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) will allow results to be emailed to a recipient. When recording results in this manner it is important to make sure that the results are labelled in such a way that will allow them to be clearly identified and accessed at a later stage.

(ii) Search tools

The following list provides guidance on some basic search tools and how they can be incorporated into a search query for use on databases.

Thesaurus

This tool is useful in addressing the fluidity that exists for much of social science terminology. Some databases use free text searching, where the researcher can search using 'natural language', in addition some also provide a thesaurus, which is an index of subject headings or descriptors that are used to describe the subject of an article. This allows the researcher to search using the database's controlled vocabulary and thus can increase the accuracy and specificity of a search.

The best thesauri are of course those that are comprehensive and kept current to mesh with the changing terminology particularly associated with the social sciences. As this cannot be guaranteed, it is safest for researchers to use a combination of free text and thesaurus-based language in their searches.

Boolean operators

These operators link single terms or phrases to build up more complex search statements which exclude unneeded references thereby increasing the accuracy of the search results. Boolean operators vary across databases, the most common three operators are set out below, but it should be noted that the exact Boolean terms used by different databases might vary from the terms shown below.

- | | |
|------------|---|
| AND | (alternatively &, +, or * in some databases)
Used to narrow a search by retrieving records containing <i>all</i> of the words it separates:
E.g. sport AND youth searches for both terms in a document. |
| OR | (alternatively / in some databases)
Used to broaden a search by retrieving records containing <i>any</i> of the search terms:
E.g. sport OR youth searches for either term in a document. |

NOT (alternatively AND NOT or \ in some databases)
Used to narrow a search by retrieving records that do not contain the search term following it:
E.g. sport NOT youth searches for documents that contain the term sport but not the term youth.

Proximity or adjacency operators

This search tool is not available on all social science databases, but where it is present it can be used to specify the relative location of specific words in the document. The symbols n and w are most commonly used. The n is used to represent the word "near" and w is used to represent "with(in)". The assumption behind this search tool is that the closer the words are together, the more directly related they are to each other. Note once again that the convention used varies across databases. Users need to check the database help pages to see if proximity searching is available and if so, what format applies to the particular database being searched.

– 'Near' and 'With' operators

To search for all documents where the word health is near³ the word sport the following search may be performed:

health (near) sport

or where you want to find two words that appear next to (are adjacent to) each other⁴ or are within # words of each other:

health (w) sport

health (2w) sport (here #=2)

In the above example 2w is used to indicate the spacing between search terms so that health (2w) sport should retrieve documents that contain sentences where the words health and sport are separated by 2 or less words.

³ In some databases 'near' is used to retrieve documents where the search words are within 10 words of each other. The proximity implied by the 'near' search tool varies across databases.

⁴ Whether the search is conducted for words that are adjacent *in the order typed* depends on the database being searched.

In some databases these operators find the search terms in the order they are entered whereas other databases search for terms regardless of the order in which they occur in the search statement.

–Phrase searching

Some databases, for example the Campbell Collaboration's C2-SPECTR database, search for a phrase without the need to use any operators. In others you can search for a phrase by enclosing it in quotation marks. Moreover, when using Boolean operators the inclusion of parentheses is essential in grouping words or phrases as they show the order in which the relationship should be considered.

(... or ...) and (... or ...)

In the example above the () are considered first followed by the AND and OR operators.

Truncation and wild cards

These are used to expand the scope of a search by finding variations of a word or word ending, plurals and alternate spellings. Both truncation symbols and wild cards vary across databases, with the most common symbols used being an asterisk (*), question mark (?), exclamation mark (!), hash mark (#) and dollar sign (\$). It is therefore important to read the database Help information or Searching Guide before beginning a search to be clear about the conventions used to indicate truncation and wildcards and the way in which they can be applied.

The use of truncation and wild cards will *increase* the number of records retrieved in a database search and is therefore a useful tool for modifying a search that has produced too few results. However, using a truncation symbol with terms that are common or too short can also yield many unwanted results.

Two types of truncation may be used depending on the database being searched. Unlimited truncation symbols are used at the end of a common root term to capture *any* spelling variations that occur from the symbol onwards (see examples 1-3

below). Limited truncation can be use to specify the maximum number of characters that may follow the root term (see example 4 below).

<i>Example</i>	<i>Retrieves</i>
1. crim*	crime, criminal
2. educat*	education, educated, educator
3. soc*	social, socialism, society
4. nurs*2	nurse, nurses

Some databases also allow use of a wildcard symbol to replace a character inside a word therefore allowing you to search for different spelling variations of a word. This tool is useful for capturing words which have different US and British spellings. Two types of wildcards may be used depending on the database; mandated wildcards and optional wild cards. The former can be used within or at the end of a word to substitute for one required character. Example 5 (below) illustrates the use of a mandated wild card as well as an unlimited truncation at the end of the word.

Optional wildcards can be used within a search term to substitute for one or no characters. This wildcard is used when the search statement involves a word that may have a different international spelling (see examples 6 and 7 below).

<i>Example</i>	<i>Retrieves</i>
5. wom*n*	woman, women, womens
6. organi*ation	organization, organisation
7. behavio*r	Behaviour, behavior

Note that truncation symbols and wild cards can be used anywhere in the search term except as the first character.

Some databases may also use a technique called stemming to search for words that share the same word stem and are grammatically related. One such database is Planex, where searching using the term sink* will retrieve documents that contain the terms sink, sinking, sank and sunk.

Limit functions

You can often choose to limit a search by selecting appropriate fields such as date range or material type. Clearly this tool is particularly useful when combined with other search tools.

Changing the limit fields can significantly alter the number of records retrieved. The following search in Planex was used to find all documents with regeneration and youth in the full text of the document without the terms Scotland, Scottish or Scots. This search yielded 69 records:

	<i>Limit Field</i>	
Regeneration	in Full Document	AND
Youth	in Full Document	NOT
Scot*	in Full Document	

By changing all the limit fields to *Title* the number of records was significantly reduced to 3, that is, there were only 3 records where the combination of search terms occurred in the record's title.

(iii) Forming search queries

Databases show great sensitivity to variations in search queries. By altering search operators and varying the terminology in the search statement it is possible to form specific queries that significantly reduce the number of unwanted hits (records). In the following examples the database Planex is used to illustrate this sensitivity.

The search queries below were formed in Planex and the number of hits they retrieved recorded. In all cases the search terms were specifically limited to appear in the *title* of a document, which in itself produces a more manageable number of hits.

<i>Search Query</i>	<i>Number of Hits</i>
1 - urban AND regeneration	300
2 - urban AND renewal	96
3 - urban regeneration OR urban renewal AND art*	286
4 - urban renewal OR urban regeneration AND art*	63
5 - urban regeneration AND art*	6
6 - urban renewal AND art*	3

Note the large difference in the number of records retrieved using search statements 3 and 4. The only difference between these search queries is the order in which the two terms urban regeneration and urban renewal enter the search statements.

Search queries 5 and 6 illustrate the importance of varying terminology to capture relevant documents that would otherwise not be retrieved. Similarly, comparing search queries 1 and 2 we see that if the researcher fails to search using the term regeneration, in addition to the term renewal, they would bypass 204 potentially relevant documents.

Search queries 5 and 6 illustrate how forming a specific search statement can avoid the problem of retrieving too many irrelevant hits.

One further point to consider when forming search queries is the use of parentheses. The following search statement can be used to retrieve documents containing the terms urban and rural, but not those containing the terms regeneration, regenerated, regenerator etc. The inclusion of parentheses in this particular search query calls for the part of the statement in parentheses to be evaluated first.

(urban and rural) not regenerat*

(iv) General guidance for composing a database search

The following are helpful points to keep in mind when conducting a database search:

- Use a wide range of databases including those with coverage of “grey” literature as well as academic databases. Grey literature has a number of benefits such as being more up to date than journal papers and in some cases can contain details of method used rather than just results and may be more useful in assessing evidence quality.
- Start with a fairly general search to gauge the quantity of material available and hence the suitability of the database for your search query.
- If available, make use of database provided thesaurus or index of terms but do not entirely abandon free text searching as thesauri based language may not be up to date.
- Do not use limiting phrases; instead use Boolean logic to link search terms to other key search terms.
- Use search operators such as Boolean logic, truncation and wild cards where appropriate. Using fields, such as publication date, to limit the search query, can further focus search results.
- Once relevant references have been found use keywords used in the indexing of the document to carry out subsequent searches.
- If subscription to database does not include retrieval of reference material the British Library Document Supply Service (BLDSS) may prove to be a more economical option. Requests for articles should be sent to the DCMS Information Centre and not direct to the BLDSS.

II. Database summaries likely to be of relevance to DCMS interests

(i) Introduction

The following section outlines several specialised and two solely academic databases that may be useful to researchers and policymakers in the DCMS in the process of compiling evidence. For example, using two of the databases in this section, Planex and ChildData, seven of the references that are used in Attachment B of a recent DCMS Technical Paper can be retrieved⁵.

Where possible, for each database a website address is listed where researchers can find the relevant Help pages for searching that particular database. In some cases the Help pages can only be accessed if the researcher holds a subscription to the database. However, the summaries also act as a quick guide highlighting the basic search operators of each database although referring to the relevant Help pages will allow more accurate search queries to be constructed.

The information provided for each database includes:

1. Web address and Help pages;
2. Document coverage;
3. Subject coverage;
4. Date coverage;
5. Frequency of updates;
6. Access to full text;
7. Searching and search operators.

These summaries should enable the researcher to determine the suitability of the database for their research. To obtain a collection of search results that are comprehensive it is necessary to search various databases, both academic and specialised. Key characteristics are summarised in Table 1.

⁵ *A Research Strategy for DCMS 2003-2005/05*, Creigh-Tyte, S. and Mundy, G., (June 2003), DCMS: Technical Paper No 3.

The section below also provides details of subscription costs and current access status for the DCMS. Some databases such as AgeInfo and ChildData offer single user web subscriptions whereas others only offer a site subscription at a higher cost. For those databases where the Department's Information Centre (IC) holds a subscription, access to the database is mediated through IC staff.

A more comprehensive list of databases available to social science researchers, including those mentioned below, is available through the EBPP resources page of the Evidence Network website (www.evidencenetwork.org). *Attachment A* provides a brief description of several of these databases which DCMS researchers *may* find useful.

A possible merger of five of the specialised databases discussed below is currently under negotiation and if successful a UK public and social policy database of abstracts will be created in 2004⁶, with around 700,000 records. Access to this national database would be gained through Ovid Technologies on the web or possibly via Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (CSA) by paying a single subscription fee. The aim is to have all five databases within the same interface to allow simultaneous cross-database searching using one set of standard operators. This would help cut down on the time which would otherwise be needed to become familiar with the search tools of each database.

In the case of agreement being reached the five specialised databases in question will still be available separately for those who do not want to subscribe to the new national database.

⁶ The five specialised databases involved are Acompline, AgeInfo, CareData, ChildData and Planex. This project is currently being run by Alan Gomersall from the ESRC's UK Centre for Evidence Based Policy and Practice (EBPP).

Table 1: Summary of Key Characteristics of Main DCMS Relevant Databases

Database	Subject coverage	Material coverage	Database size	Coverage begins	Frequency of web updates	Full text access	Source
Acompline <i>DCMS holds subscription</i>	urban and local government Focus on literature from south of England	academic and grey literature	over 300,000 references	1980	monthly	none may offer document loans in 2004	Greater London Authority (GLA)
AgeInfo <i>free Internet access to restricted output</i>	social issues including housing, leisure, health, poverty, pensions, age discrimination and minority ethnic elders. UK focus but increasing European and US material	academic and grey literature	40,000 references on main database	1970s	monthly	none may offer document loans in 2004	Centre for Policy on Ageing (CPA)
ASSIA <i>DCMS holds subscription</i>	communication, education, family, health, unemployment, immigration, social work, urban planning English language journals, UK emphasis	academic	over 300,000	1987	monthly	none	Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (CSA)
CareData <i>free Internet access</i>	Social care English language sources	academic and grey literature	over 50,000	1986	monthly	some full text access	National Institute of Social Work

ChildData	social welfare, education and health of children and young people. Focus on UK data with some European and international	academic and grey literature	over 57,000 references on main bibliographic database	1989	monthly	some full text access on internet may offer document loans in 2004	National Children's Bureau
Cochrane Library <i>DCMS access to one database in Library</i>	Healthcare broadly defined	systematic reviews	N/A	N/A	regular	yes	Cochrane Collaboration
C2-SPECTR <i>free Internet access</i>	social work, welfare, education and criminology	systematic reviews	over 11,000 references	N/A	regular	none	Campbell Collaboration
IBSS	Communication and media, economics, education, environment, family studies, tourism, health, race and ethnic studies, sociology, urban and rural studies International data	academic	2 million references	1951	weekly with 2,000 records added a week	none	British Library of Political & Economic Science of the London School of Economics and Political Science
Planex	urban and rural regeneration and development Focus on Scottish literature	academic and grey literature	over 93,000	1980	weekly bulletins and fortnightly topic updates	full text document supply service for full subscribers	IDOX Information Services


(ii) Specialised databases

Acompline

<i>Web address</i>	www.eins.org/databases/35.html
<i>Help pages</i>	None Found (website is currently inaccessible)
<i>Document coverage</i>	<p>Bibliographic database. Over 300,000 records: bibliographic details and abstracts of journal papers, reports, government publications, conference proceedings and books on all aspects of local government.</p> <p>CD-ROM called Urbadisc includes French, Italian, German and Spanish urban databases.</p> <p>No abstracts available for foreign language references on Urbadisc.</p>
<i>Subject coverage</i>	<p>Urban and local government policy, practice and administration, social policy, transport, education, health, housing, urban regeneration, economic development, recreation and the arts, ethnic minorities.</p> <p>Emphasis on London related issues.</p>
<i>Dates covered</i>	1980 to current
<i>Updates</i>	Web: monthly (approximately 1,000 references a month) CD-ROM: quarterly
<i>Full text access</i>	None
<i>Indexing and searching</i>	Free text indexing and searching. No thesaurus available.
<i>Search operators</i>	Boolean operators: AND, OR, and NOT Proximity operators: ADJ (=adjacent) Truncation symbol: * Wildcard symbol: ?
<i>Source</i>	Greater London Authority
<i>Access</i>	<p>Currently available on CD-Rom (Urbadisc) with web access expected in near future.</p> <p>DCMS Information Centre holds subscription, access mediated by the IC Manager and Deputy Manager.</p>

AgeInfo

<i>Web address</i>	http://www.cpa.org.uk/ageinfo/ageinfo2.html
<i>Help pages</i>	http://ageinfo.cpa.org.uk/ageinfo/help/formhelp.html Helpline provided for advice on searching and technical assistance: 020 7553 6500
<i>Document coverage</i>	Main bibliographic database has over 40,000 references to book, articles, statistical sources, reports and government publications. Abstracts available for most references. Two additional databases: organisations database and calendar of events database.
<i>Subject coverage</i>	UK focused with increasing emphasis on European and US material. Emphasis on social issues, topics include: housing, leisure activities, health, poverty, pensions and social exclusion, age discrimination and minority and ethnic elders
<i>Dates covered</i>	1970s to current (with some references going back to 1900)
<i>Updates</i>	Web: monthly CD-ROM: quarterly
<i>Full text access</i>	No full text access, however, documents are stored in the CPA Library and can be viewed by appointment. Users pay for photocopying only.
<i>Indexing and searching</i>	Searching carried out using database controlled language. Adding @ symbol to the end of a thesaurus keyword carries out an 'exploded' search, i.e. a search on keyword term and all narrower terms in the thesaurus hierarchy. CD-ROM has more sophisticated search facilities.
<i>Search operators</i>	Boolean operators: AND, &, OR, /, NOT, \ Truncation symbol: * Phrase searching: "and" (including quotation marks)
<i>Source</i>	Library and Information Service of the Centre for Policy on Ageing (CPA)
<i>Access</i>	Single user web or CD-ROM subscription: £600 p.a. excluding VAT Limited free access to one record evaluation version of database: http://ageinfo.cpa.org.uk/scripts/ageinfo/hfclient.exe?A=AgeInfo&lg= IC does NOT hold subscription. However, they do have access to a US database called AgeLine, searches to be carried out by the IC Manager and Deputy Manager.

CareData	
<i>Web address</i>	http://www.elsc.org.uk/caredata.htm
<i>Help pages</i>	<p>Comprehensive help pages: http://195.195.162.66/dbtw-wpd/help/wpbegin.htm</p> <p>Brief help pages: use the 'search instructions' link at the following website: http://195.195.162.66/elsc/caredata/caredatasearch.htm</p> <p>For further help with entering data select the  icon next to the search fields.</p>
<i>Document coverage</i>	<p>Bibliographic database. Over 50,000 abstracts of books, central and local government reports, research papers, journal articles and publications of voluntary organisations.</p> <p>UK, North America and other English language sources.</p>
<i>Subject coverage</i>	<p>Children, community work, education, employment ethnic minorities, families, health older people, poverty social exclusion, unemployment, young people.</p> <p>Research and practice covered.</p>
<i>Dates covered</i>	<p>1986 to current</p> <p>Summaries of books and articles included, back to 1986, with some earlier entries.</p>
<i>Updates</i>	Monthly
<i>Full text access</i>	Web links are provided to documents available online, some of which are free and others may require payment to be viewed.
<i>Indexing and searching</i>	Indexing carried out using database controlled language but free text and thesaurus both available for searching.
<i>Search operators</i>	<p>Boolean operators: & (=and), / (=or), ! (=not)</p> <p>Proximity operators: w# (=within), p# (=preceding)</p> <p>Truncation symbol: *</p> <p>Phrase searching: no operator required</p>
<i>Source</i>	National Institute of Social Work
<i>Access</i>	Freely available: http://www.elsc.org.uk/caredata.htm

ChildData

<i>Web address</i>	General information: http://www.ncb.org.uk/library/services/childdata.htm Login page: http://www.childdata.org.uk/
<i>Help pages</i>	Help pages only accessible to subscribers and can be found by following relevant links.
<i>Document coverage</i>	Bibliographic database. UK focused with some European and International material. Six reference databases covering policy, legislation, practice and research. Main bibliographic database has over 57,000 records of journals, books, official publications and report literature. Abstracts provided. Other databases include: an index to children and parliament with more than 21,000 items going back to 1990 covering parliamentary matters relating to children; newspaper database going back to 1996; organisation database; and the UN Convention and Children's Rights in the UK.
<i>Subject coverage</i>	Social welfare, education and schooling, child development, child psychology, and health of children and young people.
<i>Dates covered</i>	Research and practice covered. 1989 to current (some earlier)
<i>Updates</i>	Web: monthly CD-ROM: quarterly
<i>Full text access</i>	Some full text access on the internet No full text access on the CD-ROM
<i>Indexing and searching</i>	Indexing is done using free-text and database controlled language. Only free text searching available.
<i>Search operators</i>	Boolean operators: & (=and), / (=or), NOT Truncation allowed
<i>Source</i>	National Children's Bureau
<i>Access</i>	Available on internet and CD-ROM Single user web or CD-ROM subscription: £600 p.a. excluding VAT Free trial subscription can be requested. IC does NOT hold subscription. May be able to obtain similar information through sources already available to the DCMS IC. Access mediated by the IC Manager and Deputy Manager.

The Cochrane Library

<i>Web address</i>	www.update-software.com/cochrane/
<i>Help pages</i>	Internet and CD-ROM help guides available: http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/cochlib.htm
<i>Document coverage</i>	Systematic Review Centre covering seven evidence-based medicine databases. Abstracts provided
<i>Subject coverage</i>	Healthcare broadly defined (includes compulsive gambling treatment).
<i>Dates covered</i>	N/A
<i>Updates</i>	Quarterly
<i>Full text access</i>	Yes
<i>Indexing and searching</i>	Indexing carried out using database controlled language. Both free text and controlled language available for searching. It is recommended that both be used. Advanced search allows previous search results to be combined with current search.
<i>Search operators</i>	Boolean Operators: AND, OR and NOT Proximity operators: near (searches for words within 6 words of each other and is not sensitive to order of words in search statement) Truncation symbol: * Phrase searching: no operator required
<i>Source</i>	Cochrane Collaboration
<i>Access</i>	Available on internet and CD-ROM. Abstracts of Cochrane reviews are available without charge. Other elements of database are subscription based: Single user web or CD-ROM subscription: £290 p.a. excluding VAT IC has access to one of the databases in the Cochrane library: Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews. This database has full-texts of articles reviewing the effects of healthcare. Reviews are structured and systematic, with evidence included based on quality criteria, to minimise bias.

C2-SPECTR (C2 Social, Psychological, Education and Criminological Trials Registry)

<i>Web address</i>	www.campbellcollaboration.org
<i>Help pages</i>	http://geb9101.gse.upenn.edu/RIS/RISWEB.ISA Detailed help pages: http://geb9101.gse.upenn.edu/RISIMAGES/help.htm#REFERENCCELIST
<i>Document coverage</i>	Systematic Review Centre with over 11,000 records of completed and planned randomised and possibly randomised trials in education, social welfare and criminal justice. Each record contains citation and availability information and usually an abstract.
<i>Subject coverage</i>	Social work and welfare, education and criminology.
<i>Dates</i>	N/A
<i>Updates</i>	Regular
<i>Full text access</i>	Doesn't appear to have full text of documents
<i>Indexing and searching</i>	Free text searching
<i>Search operators</i>	Boolean operators: AND, OR and NOT Truncation allowed Basic search assumes wildcard Wildcard is assumed in basic search Phrase searching: " " required in basic search only
<i>Source</i>	Campbell Collaboration
<i>Access</i>	Freely available: http://geb9101.gse.upenn.edu/RIS/RISWEB.ISA

Planex	
<i>Web address</i>	www.planex.ndirect.co.uk/
<i>Help pages</i>	<p>Help pages only accessible to subscribers:</p> <p>Basic Search with tips: http://www.planex.ndirect.co.uk/members/pow/b_search.htm</p> <p>Guided Search: http://www.planex.ndirect.co.uk/members/pow/g_search.htm</p>
<i>Document coverage</i>	<p>Over 93,000 abstracts: journal articles, books, documents and official reports; particularly strong in grey literature with reports from central and local government, research institutes, charities, think tanks and case studies. Abstract for each item prepared by IDOX library.</p> <p>UK focused with emphasis on Scotland.</p>
<i>Subject coverage</i>	Urban and rural regeneration, local economic development, planning and environment, social work services, transportation of road infrastructure, recreation and leisure, tourism, housing, education, public sector management issues ⁷ .
<i>Dates</i>	1970s to current with abstracts going back up to 10 years.
<i>Updates</i>	Updated weekly with approximately 160 new references (Weekly Bulletin and fortnightly Topic Updates ⁸).
<i>Full text access</i>	No full text access on-line. Document Supply Service: full texts held within IDOX library and where permitted photocopies sent out within 24-36 hours, other items sent out on loan.
<i>Indexing and searching</i>	Indexing carried out using database controlled language but free text and thesaurus both available for searching. Thesaurus only available by contacting IDOX information Service.
<i>Search operators</i>	<p>Boolean operators: AND, OR, and NOT</p> <p>Truncation symbol: * (** searches for words sharing the same word stem that are also grammatically related)</p> <p>Phrase searching: no operator required</p>
<i>Source</i>	IDOX Information Services

⁷ This is not a comprehensive list but is provided by IDOX Information services to indicate the depth and breadth of subject areas covered by the database.

⁸ Weekly bulletins sent by e-mail or post and contain around 50 of the new items from that week, covering the full range of subject areas. Fortnightly Topic Updates sent by e-mail and cover themes and issues selected by members.

(ii) Academic Databases

ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts)

<i>Web address</i>	http://www.csa.com/
<i>Help pages</i>	Select 'i' symbol next to search fields to display relevant help pages
<i>Documents coverage</i>	Bibliographic database with over 300,000 records from 650 English language journals (UK emphasis), conference papers and book reviews. Abstracts available.
<i>Subject coverage</i>	Major areas of coverage include: communication, criminology, education, elderly, ethnic studies, family, health, housing, unemployment, immigration, social work, substance abuse, urban renewal and regeneration; social and public policy; women's studies.
<i>Dates covered</i>	1987 to current
<i>Updates</i>	Monthly
<i>Full text access</i>	None
<i>Indexing and searching</i>	Indexing carried out using database controlled language but free text and thesaurus both available for searching.
<i>Search operators</i>	Boolean operators: AND, OR, and NOT Thesaurus available on-line but not on CR-ROM Truncation and wildcard use allowed
<i>Source</i>	Cambridge Scientific Abstracts
<i>Access</i>	DCMS Information Centre holds subscription, access mediated by the IC Manager and Deputy Manager. Unlimited site access: £2600 p.a. excluding VAT (single user web subscription not available).

IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences)

<i>Web address</i>	General information: http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/IBSS/ Login page: http://www.bids.ac.uk/
<i>Help pages</i>	User Guide: http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/IBSS/support/UserGuides.htm Online tutorial to be provided in early 2004: http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/IBSS/
<i>Document coverage</i>	Bibliographic databases with 2 million references to journal articles, books, reviews and selected chapters. Abstracts available for approximately half of all current journals. Government reports do not appear to be abstracted. International coverage: approximately 30 per cent of all records are in a language other than English, with most of these being accompanied with an English title translation.
<i>Subject coverage</i>	Focus on social sciences with additional coverage of other related and interdisciplinary fields such as social policy, education, environmental issues and social work. Subjects include: communication and media; cultural studies; demography; economics; education; environment; family studies; geography including tourism; health; policy studies; sociology; urban and rural studies.
<i>Dates covered</i>	1950 to current
<i>Updates</i>	Weekly (approximately 2,000 new records added each week)
<i>Full text access</i>	None
<i>Indexing and searching</i>	Indexing appears to be free text ⁹ . No thesaurus searching available.
<i>Search operators</i>	Boolean operators: AND, OR and NOT Truncation symbol * and wildcard symbol ? Wild word symbol: # Phrase searching: no operator required

⁹ <http://evidencenetwork.org>

<i>Source</i>	British Library of Political & Economic Science of the London School of Economics
<i>Access</i>	Single user web subscription: £1,000 p.a. including VAT. ¹⁰ One month free trial included. IC does NOT hold subscription. However, IC does have subscription to ASSIA, which is a similar database with academic literature.

¹⁰ This quote is for a non-profit organization. An alternative quote of £1,500 p.a. including VAT applies to companies.

Attachment A:

Short Summaries of Other Databases

The following database summaries have been grouped according to their availability to DCMS staff.

Freely available databases:

Be Evidence Based

<http://www.be-evidence-based.com/>

- Provided by the Centre for Evidence Based Social Services (CEBSS) and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE).
- Documents outline key research findings from critically appraised social care research. Subjects covered include: young people, children and families; mental health; research into evidence-based practice; older people; working with ethnic minorities; and training and education in social care.
- Freely available.

ESRC Data Archive

<http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>

- Largest social sciences and humanities archive in the U.K. containing around 4,000 datasets that are related to the U.K.
- Subject covered include economic behaviour, education, ethnic minorities, health, housing, law, leisure, recreation and tourism.
- Some data available freely on-line. Contact archive for information on how to obtain other data.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

<http://www.jrf.org.uk>

- Database summarises *Findings* of completed research projects:
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/>
- Subjects covered include social policy, children, social inclusion, social exclusion, urban regeneration/renewal and poverty.
- Freely available.

Nordic Campbell Centre (NC2)

www.nc2.net

- A systematic review centre and a regional partner of the international Campbell Collaboration, with focus on social and welfare policy.
- Provides details of systematic Campbell reviews in progress and those that are planned: <http://www.sfi.dk/sw1400.asp>
- Freely available.

Policy Brief

<http://www.policybrief.org/>

- Very small database of around 1,200 documents covering public policy initiatives in the UK. May be worth looking at as it does not take much time to search.
- Subjects covered include society, transport, health and social care.
- Freely available.

Policy Hub

<http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/>

- Managed by the Cabinet Office to promote improvements in policy making and delivery.
- Subjects include crime, children, health, mental health, socio-economic regeneration, arts, and young people.
- Freely available.

Social Science Information Gateway (SOSIG)

www.sosig.ac.uk

- Three sources of information:
 - (i) SOSIG Internet Catalogue - online database of Internet sites and resources each selected by a librarian or academic to ensure relevant results.
 - (ii) Social Science Search Engine - More records than the Internet Catalogue with over 50,000 social science web pages but quality of resources is less certain and separate description for records do not exist.
 - (iii) Social Science Grapevine – forum for exchange of information, which also provides details of contacts in different fields.
- Freely available Internet service (Help pages: <http://www.sosig.ac.uk/help/>).

Databases accessible to IC staff:

EconLit

<http://www.econlit.org/>

- Economic database with abstracts, indexing and links to full-text articles in economic journals with coverage going back to 1969.
- Indexes journal articles, chapters and papers in books and conference proceedings, books and dissertations.
- Selected abstracts.
- Full text of Journal of Economic Literature book reviews.
- Updated quarterly.
- Provided by the American Economic Association (AEA).

ERIC (Educational Resources Information Centre)

<http://eric.ed.gov/>

- Bibliographic database covering education related literature with over one million records.
- Index and abstracts of journal articles, books and grey literature covering education research and practice.
- Emphasis on U.S. material with coverage from 1966.
- Updated monthly (web) and quarterly (CD-ROM).
- Produced by the U.S. Department of Education.

Inside

<http://www.bl.uk/services/current/inside.html>

- Multidisciplinary bibliographic database with coverage of 20,000 journals (7,000 in the social sciences) and conference proceedings from 1993.
- View table of contents of all issues of journals received in British Library since 1993. Abstracts only provided in a few cases.
- No coverage of grey literature.
- Two million records added each year. Wide coverage and up-to-date with records being added within a few days of journal's publication.
- Produced by the British Library.

Lexis-Nexis

www.lexisnexis.com

- Newspaper article database with news areas including the U.S. and foreign newspapers.
- Coverage from 1993 to current day.
- Full text (most records) and citation access.
- Updated continuously.

Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)

<http://www.isinet.com/products/citation/ssci/index.html>

- Database with academic literature.
- Subjects covered include children, urban regeneration, health care, social exclusion, ethnic minorities and crime.
- DCMS Information Centre holds subscription; access mediated by centre staff.

Wilson Social Sciences Abstracts

<http://www.ovid.com/site/catalog/DataBase/193.jsp?top=2&mid=3&bottom=7&subsection=10>

- Database of English-language journals in the areas of anthropology, criminology, economics, law, geography, policy studies, psychology, sociology, social work and urban studies.
- Indexing starts from 1983 and abstracts from 1994.
- DCMS Information Centre holds subscription; access mediated by centre staff.

Database requiring subscription:

Policy File

www.policyfile.com (can only be viewed by subscribers)

- Database of US social science and health research that includes grey literature.
- Abstracts provided and in some cases links to public policy research reports since 1990.
- Subscription based but can be accessed freely by British Library users.

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