



2 BECOMING A SEARCHER

2.4 WHICH ONLINE RESOURCE?

GOAL

Participants will develop understanding of which EPIC databases or Web resources might be the most relevant source for a specific information need.

OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Develop some understanding of the decision-making process in selecting appropriate resources through a short exercise in selection
- Be introduced to a brief guide to the selection process.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Trainers will ask potential participants PRIOR to attendance:

- If you have to use database resources how do you decide which are potentially the most relevant or useful?
- If the information need appears relate to a range of subject areas, which type of database might be most useful to try?
- Which full text databases would you select when you need to include NZ content?
- Are there any EPIC resources suitable for younger students?

If the trainer is confident in the potential participants' ability and understanding of these questions, then the session could be shortened to a quick run through of Exercise 2.4 E as a restatement of some key criteria for selection.

2.4 TRAINING CONTENT: WHICH ONLINE RESOURCE?

DURATION OF SESSION: 28+ MINUTES

Content	Duration	Key Points	Practical
Decision making for online resource selection	8 min	Selection of appropriate online resources requires a structured approach, considering clearly the main elements or categories of an information query.	Ask a few participants how they make decisions on which database to use? Endorse valid approaches and then hand out and run quickly through the selection decision chart 2.4D . Refer participants also to EPIC database descriptions in s.1.1 [NB. If your library has other resources or some of these are not commonly used it is preferable to revise the Decision chart to better fit your needs – which could include more Web sources]
Web searching vs. databases?	5 min	An effective approach can be to use Google to quickly establish key facts or names and then databases to provide reputable, in depth information. Use the Web + Databases as complements to each other.	Participants directed to search for famous Irish woman revolutionary “countess markevich” in HRC noting that we are unsure of the spelling. [No useful results] Ask how we could find the correct spelling of the name? [Options - but fastest may be to use Google?]. Suggest enter search: <i>irish revolution countess</i> Find name ('Markievicz') and ask them copy and paste into HRC search box [> useful results]
Exercise	15+ min	Skill in selecting an appropriate resource can be developed using a few key decision factors and some broad familiarity with the range and level of content of available resources.	<i>Exercise 2.4E1</i> : Participants asked to carry out exercise, using the selection decision chart (2.4D) [NB. If participants totally unfamiliar with content also hand out EPIC database descriptions from s.1.1] Trainer then leads brief discussion of choices. Aim to emphasise some broad criteria that emerge along the lines indicated by the decision chart. Repeat process for <i>Exercise 2.4 E2</i> (if time) Optional: Ask participants to do searches on issues that caused most debate or uncertainty as to the best resource

EXERCISE 2.4 E1 SELECTING AN ONLINE RESOURCE

Tick the resource(s) you feel would provide the most useful and substantial information for each query.
More than one may be applicable for some topics. Spend no more than 1 min per topic.

Information Query	EBO	OVRC	HWRC	PQSJ	HRC	ANZRC	GA	Te Ara	Google (Web)
Global warming impacts on NZ/Pacific									
Impact of smoking ban on NZ pubs & bars									
All about Mammoths for Y8 students									
Passive smoking and health of children									
Pacific tapa cloth making									
Italian migration to NZ									
Battle of Alamein									
Nutrition benefits of omega-3 oils									
Work of the NZ artist Mervyn Taylor									

EXERCISE 2.4 E2 SELECTING AN ONLINE RESOURCE

Tick the resource(s) you feel would provide the most useful and substantial information for each query.
More than one may be applicable for some topics. Spend no more than 1 min per topic.

Information Query	BRC	OVRC	EBO	LRC	GOF	ANZRC	PQSJ	SRC	Google (Web)
Biofuels: potential benefits and drawbacks									
Impacts and control of introduced animals									
Critical reviews of Maya Angelou novels									
Economic benefits of immigration									
'Compulsive shopping' – as a social/psychological issue									
Illegal catching of Patagonian toothfish									
Use and ethics of DNA profiling									
The life and influence of Rosa Parks									
Impact of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami									

2.4 WHICH ONLINE RESOURCE?

Selecting which online resource to use is challenging for the inexperienced searcher. Initially it may be more trial and error than good judgement. While you can pick up broad indications from reading resource guides or watching demonstrations of use, consistent competency in this skill will develop only with exposure to the resources in actual practice. Real understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the content takes time to build. This necessary learning process can however be accelerated by adopting a few measures:

LEARN FROM MISTAKES

Whenever you finish a search where you are left with the feeling that the resource you used didn't provide what you hoped for, then make a brief note of it and rerun the search with one or two other resources when you get a quieter moment. Often this will help sort for you the comparative coverage of resources and enable you to consider results in a situation of less pressure. It can also be a time to rethink search strategies to determine if that was the problem as much which resource was used.

ASK OTHERS

When you observe or hear of another colleague or student successfully using a particular resource then ask them why they chose that one? What did they take into account in making that decision? And learning what was tried and didn't work is of course just as valuable. Picking up on others experience is how we learn just about everything so this shouldn't be an exception.

DEVELOP A DECISION CHART

A sample chart of a structured approach to making selection decisions is attached for EPIC databases (2.4D). If this doesn't quite correspond to your areas of frequent interest then you could adapt it to better state your local needs. This could in fact be a valuable exercise in clarifying on what basis you currently make such decisions and evolving a more structured approach.

Accept that it may not be a one or other choice – often a question will best be satisfied by a number of resources, print and digital, or the preferred strategy may be to use Google to efficiently dig up some key facts and then resort to a database for more detailed or authoritative information. Experience will show that calling on more than one source may well be a quicker course of action than exhaustive searching of one, less relevant source.

For brief descriptions of the content of EPIC databases refer to the listing at the end of s1.1. It may be helpful to initially use this list in conjunction with the decision chart.

KEY TO DATABASE ACRONYMS

ANZRC	Australian/NZ Reference Centre (EBSCO)
B&A	Books & Authors (Gale)
BRS	Business Reference Suite
CWI	Contemporary Women's Issues (Gale)
DC	Discovering Collection (Gale)
EBO	Encyclopaedia Britannica Online
HWRC	Health & Wellness Resource Center (Gale)
HRC	History Resource Center (Gale)
GOF	General OneFile (Gale)
LRC	Literature Resource Center (Gale)
MFP	MasterFile Premier (EBSCO)
NZI	New Zealand Index (Knowledge Basket)
OAO	Oxford Art Online (Oxford Online)
OMO	Oxford Music Online (Oxford Online)
OED	Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford Online)
OVRC	Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center (Gale)
PQSJ	ProQuest Science Journals (ProQuest)
SRC	Student Resource Center (Gale)

2.4 D EPIC DATABASES – WHICH DO I USE?

