Patrick HENRY Community College WRITING CENTER

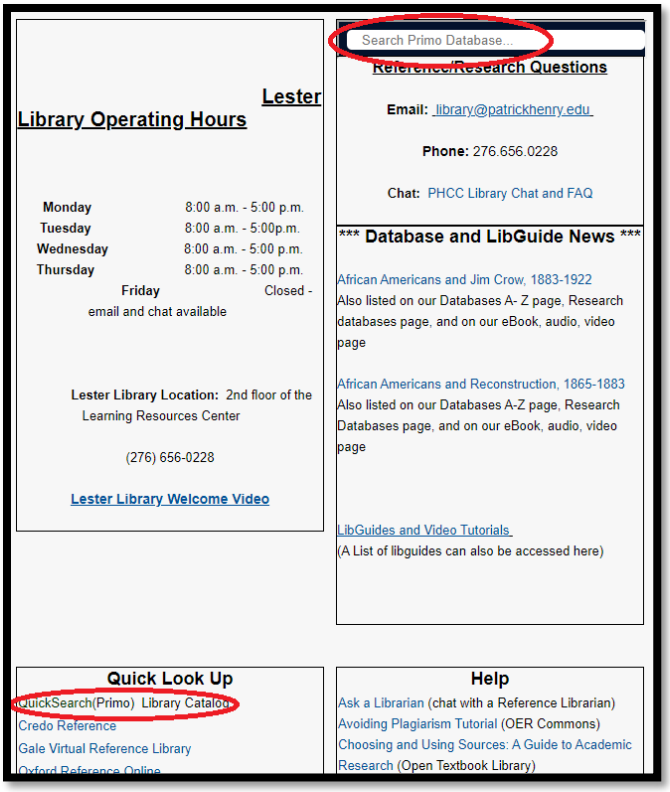
Database Research

Accessing PHCC's Library Tools

Finding reliable sources can be a daunting task; instructors tell you to use database sources, but understanding the research databases available to Patrick Henry Community College students can be challenging in its own way because of how many options are available. There are two main ways to find reference material at PHCC: one is to use the Primo Quick Search, which is a library catalog that includes all of the library material available to PHCC students (including research database material), and the other is to use the Research Databases page to search *specific* databases for information. To access either method, start by clicking on "Library" at the top of the PHCC homepage (patrickhenry.edu).

Primo Quick Search

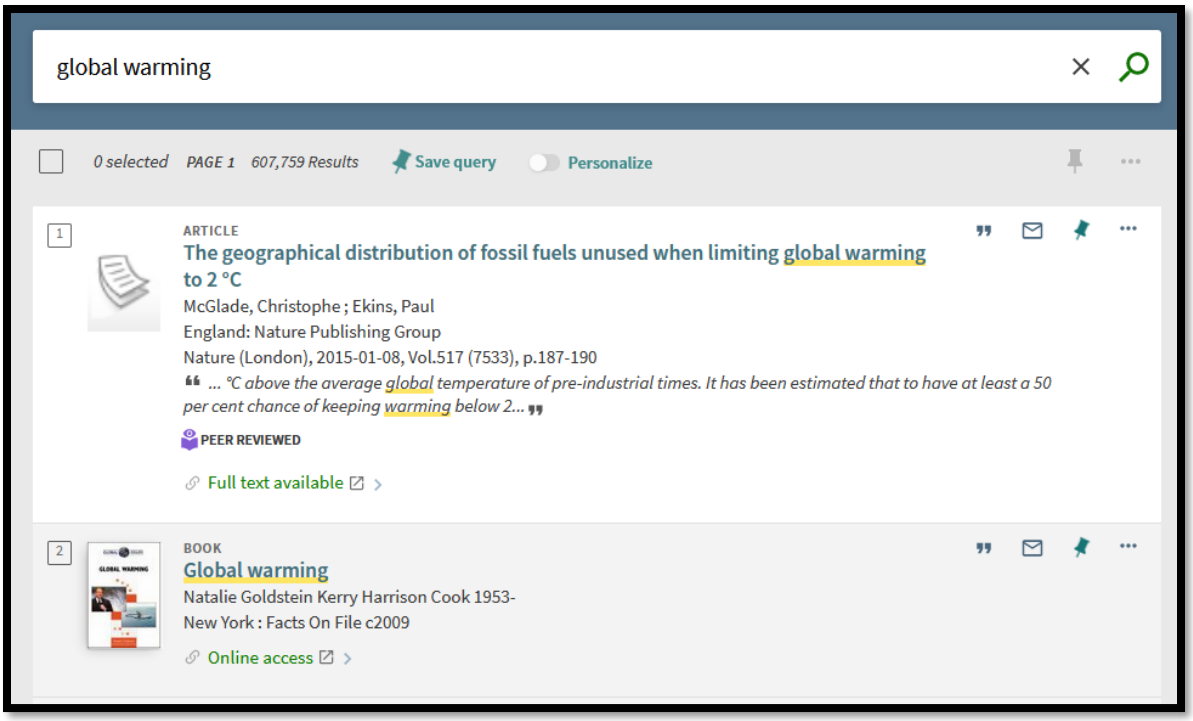
To use Primo Quick Search, start at the Library page, then click "Library Information." From there, either click on "Quick Search (Primo)" under the "Quick Look Up" section or simply type your search string in the field that says "Search Primo Database" above "Reference/Research Questions."



If you are accessing the internet from PHCC (for example, using PHCC's Wi-Fi or one of the computers on campus), you should simply be able to search. If you are on a home internet connection or otherwise accessing the database from off campus, you may be required to sign in. You will also be required to sign in if you want to request specific materials (such as physical books to check out). If you have to sign in, use the same username and password that you use to access your MyPHCC student portal (Gmail, Canvas, etc.).

Once you type your search, you should see a list of search results, and each result will show some of its catalog information such as title, author, type of source (for example, "Article"

or "Book"), and publication information, along with a snippet of the abstract for some sources. You can also use the tools in the upper-right of each source to see the citation, email the source to yourself, pin the source to your source list, and access other options.



Clicking on the source thumbnail/icon to the left of a title (or clicking on "Full text available") will take you to the source's availability page, which shows links to the databases in which the source is available. If a source is marked as "Online access," clicking the "Online access" link will usually (but not always) take you directly to the source.

You can also use Primo Quick Search to find and request physical library resources.

Direct Database Research

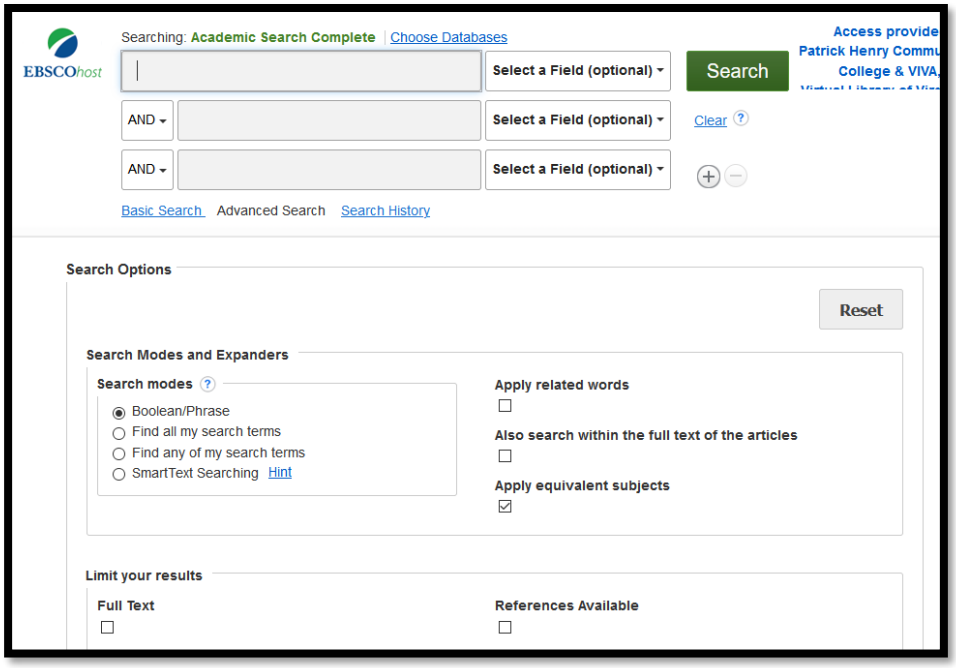
Primo Quick Search is useful when you're just casting a wide net for sources (much better than a Google search, for instance), but sometimes it can be to your benefit to simply search one or more of the research databases directly.

Through the Lester Library, you have access to *many* different research databases, all of which contain sources that are paywalled or altogether unavailable on the general web. Many PHCC students don't fully realize just how much research power is available right at their fingertips.

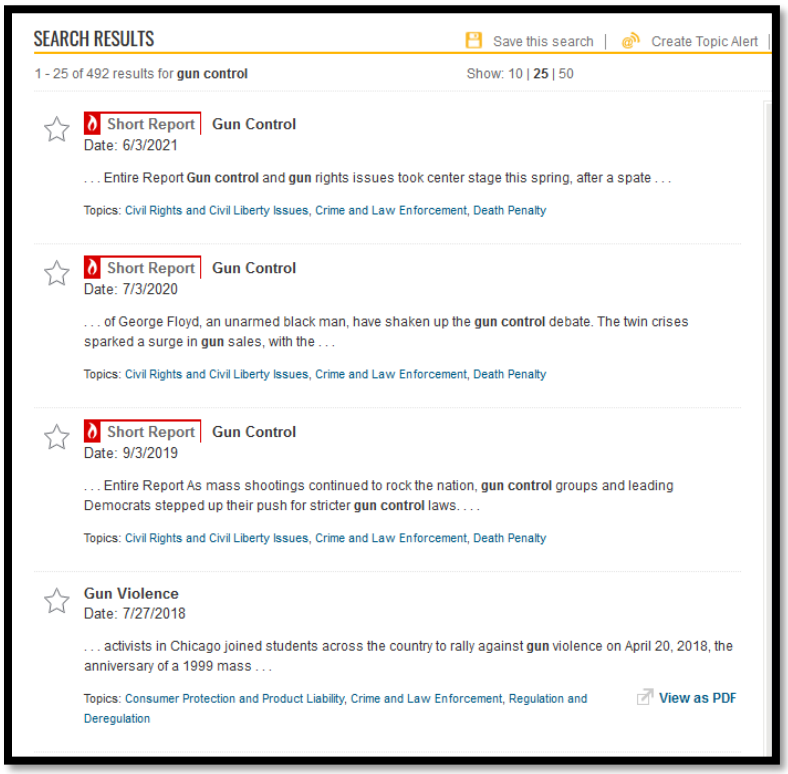
To access the research databases, go to the PHCC homepage and click "Library," then click on "Research Databases." You will see resource links for the library, and to the right of that, a list of the most popular research databases. Most of the time, you will be able to find the information you need in one of those most popular databases, but on the rare occasion that

you don't, there is a more complete list of subject-specific databases (organized by subject) below the "most popular" list. As with Primo Quick Search, you will have to log in (using your MyPHCC credentials) if you're accessing the database materials from off campus.

Each database is different, and a detailed description of how to use each one is well beyond the scope of this resource. If you need help with a specific database, you should speak with the library staff or visit the Writing Center.



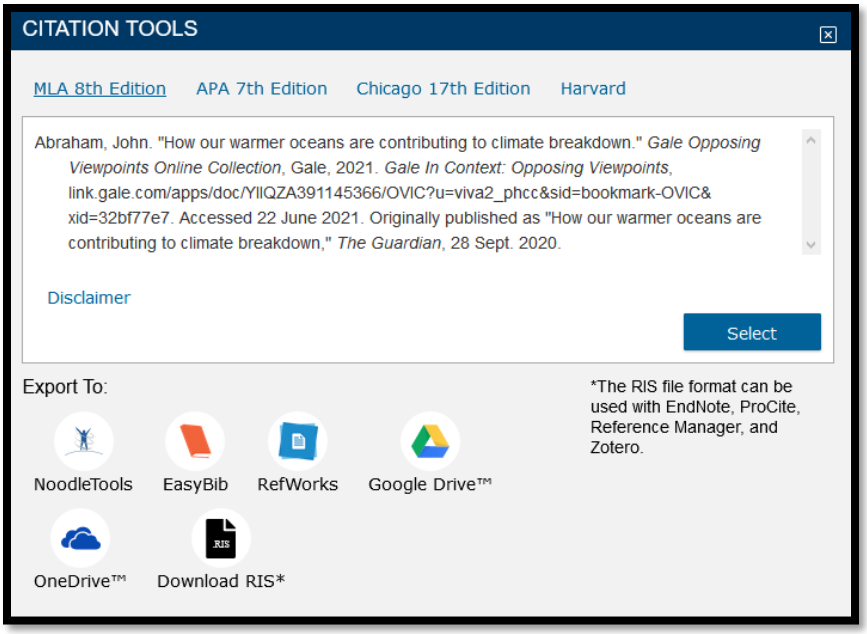
That said, most databases have at least a few things in common. There will be a search page (the one shown here is from the EBSCOhost database), and although it can look intimidating at first, it's not much different from a Google search – you just have a lot more search options at your disposal.



From the search page, you'll get a list of results (like this one from CQ Researcher) that displays the sources – usually paired with other information like type, keywords, date, and various other fields (these will differ from one database to another). From the list of search results, you can sometimes find a quick abstract – useful for getting an overview of the source before reading the entire article.

Research databases are specifically designed for research, so they often have

useful tools such as the ability to bookmark and save sources, send them as emails, and add highlights. Some of the research databases (such as Opposing Viewpoints, shown here) will even give you the citation you'll need to use on your works cited or reference page.



Of course, if you use a database's citation generator, you should always make sure the citation is correct before using it; the citations are usually generated automatically and aren't always completely right, especially if the style publisher (such as the MLA, for instance) has recently released a new edition.

While it might seem at first like Google is quicker, the research databases are specifically designed to save time; you'll get better sources, and the database tools will take a lot of the guesswork out of your research.