

# **HOW TO LOCATE BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES IN PHILOSOPHY**

When one thinks about a philosophical topic or writes a paper on such a topic, it is often useful to consider what other people have written on the topic; in other words, it is often useful to consult *bibliographic sources*. There are four main kinds of such sources: (1) journal articles, (2) articles in edited books, (3) monographs (i.e., books that are not collections of articles), and (4) internet documents. Locating bibliographic sources comes usually in two stages. First, the *exploratory* stage, with the aim of *identifying* (i.e., finding information such as the author and the title of) some, all, or the most important documents that relate to a given topic. Second, the *targeted* stage, with the aim of *obtaining* (a copy of) specific documents that one has already identified. What follows is divided into two parts that deal respectively with these two stages.

## **I. THE EXPLORATORY STAGE: HOW TO IDENTIFY DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO A GIVEN TOPIC**

1. Some people start by doing an *internet search*, using a standard search engine such as Google (at <http://www.google.com>). There are at least two reasons why this may not be a good *starting point*.
  - a. Internet searches primarily yield bibliographic sources of a specific kind, namely internet documents. Such documents usually do not go through a peer review process (about *anything* can be published on the internet), so they are in general of *lower quality* than bibliographic sources of other kinds, such as journal articles, which do go through a peer review process.
  - b. Internet searches usually yield very large numbers of (mostly irrelevant) items, so one usually needs to narrow down the search by entering more specific keywords (e.g., "dyadic deontic logic" instead of "moral reasoning"). But the relevant specific keywords are normally *technical* terms with which one may not be familiar in the *beginning* of the exploratory stage.
2. It is better to start by consulting reference works in philosophy, such as (a) the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (in ten volumes, available at the reference section of the university library, with call number B51.R68 1998), (b) the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (at <http://plato.stanford.edu>), and (c) the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (at <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep>). Articles in all three encyclopedias have extensive lists of references.
3. The most comprehensive database for work in philosophy is the *Philosopher's Index* (available through the university library, at <http://www.lib.iastate.edu/collections/db/philx.html>). It lists journal articles, articles in edited books, book reviews, and monographs. Most entries include abstracts, whose text can also be searched.
4. To identify journal articles that *refer* (and thus are in general directly relevant) to a *specific* journal article, one can use the *Arts & Humanities Citation Index* (in the *Web of Science*, available through the university library, at <http://www.lib.iastate.edu/collections/db/websci.html>).
5. Finally, it is a good idea to search the *catalog* of the university library (<http://www.lib.iastate.edu>).

## **II. THE TARGETED STAGE: HOW TO OBTAIN SPECIFIC DOCUMENTS**

1. A recommended first step is to use JSTOR ("Journal Storage", at <http://www.jstor.org>; available through the university library, at <http://www.lib.iastate.edu/collections/jourbook/sersolutions/jnlsIndex.html>). This has the complete archives (except for the last few years) of the major philosophy journals (as well as the major journals in many other disciplines). Additional journals become available from time to time. One can see the list of currently available journals by clicking "Browse" and then "Philosophy". If some of the documents identified in the exploratory stage are articles in journals available at JSTOR, it is a good idea to obtain these documents first: they are easy to obtain (one can just print them out), and they are probably of high quality (since JSTOR contains the *major* philosophy journals). (Note that in the exploratory stage one can also use the "Search" function of JSTOR.)
2. Documents not in JSTOR (e.g., books) may be available through the university library; otherwise, they can normally be obtained through interlibrary loan ([http://www.lib.iastate.edu/services/ill\\_info.html](http://www.lib.iastate.edu/services/ill_info.html)).
3. Note finally that many classic philosophical texts (e.g., by authors such as Aristotle and Kant) are available online (e.g., through <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books> or <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>).