

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 (which can be books or journal articles or static web pages). 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. **Google Scholar** (<http://scholar.google.com/schhp?hl=en&tab=ws>), however, does search for articles and is a little more authoritative than a general Google search.
 - 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.iep.utm.edu/>). 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; click on Article Indexes and Databases on the library's home page, then click on P and link to *Philosopher's Index*. 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, again, through the Article Indexes and Databases list).
5. Finally, it is a good idea to search the using the **Quick Search** box on the university e-library (<http://www.lib.iastate.edu>).

II. THE TARGETED STAGE: HOW TO OBTAIN SPECIFIC DOCUMENTS

1. A recommended first step is to use the *Journals* link on the e-Library (<http://www.lib.iastate.edu>). Search for the title of the journal to see if the library has it available electronically. Keep in mind that JOURNALS on the Internet are not the same as what are generally considered “Internet sites.” Journals online or in print are peer-reviewed and written by experts in the field, no matter what their format. If you do not find the journal title available online, check the Quick Search box on the library’s home page for the journal title; if it is available in print, you will find it through a title search of the journal (not the article title).
2. Documents not available through the university library (in print or electronic); can normally be obtained through **interlibrary loan** (<http://www.lib.iastate.edu/isu-bin/ILL>) .
3. Note finally that many classic philosophical texts (e.g., by authors such as Aristotle and Kant) are available online. Check for titles using the Library’s Quick Search box, or see the **Philosophy Subject Guide** at <http://instr.iastate.libguides.com/philosophy>.