Using EBSCOhost Databases

Here are some tips for using the EBSCOhost databases available online through the USSA Library. When a user selects this database, he or she is actually selecting sixteen different databases provided by EBSCO. These databases are listed for the user. They can all be searched simultaneously, or one or more of them can be selected for searching. Using fewer databases can speed up a search and improve the user’s chances of finding relevant results from searches.

Once the user selects the databases to be searched, the next choice is the type of search to conduct. The system defaults to do a Basic Search. This is the same type of keyword search that is conducted on the internet as a whole. It is quick and easy to use.

The user who wants to use more refined search techniques should select the Advanced Search link. This search allows the user to use Boolean search logic to narrow search results. Boolean searches are discussed in another document provided on the USSA Library web page. A user can also find information on the internet about these kinds of searches by simply conducting an online search using the term “Boolean search”.

Use of the Advanced Search window allows the user to further refine a search by moving beyond keyword searching to the use of a series of terms such as “title” and “author”. The choices are found by using the drop-down boxes provided in the search term area. The user also chooses the kind of Boolean connector he or she wants to use for a particular search.

Both Basic and Advanced searches can be further refined by the use of what are referred to as “search limiters”. These choices limit the results to certain categories, thus limiting the number of possible results found. An example of this is whether a user wants to look only at results that are available in full text versions, or to include those results only available in abstract form also. Another limiter is to limit results to only those that are found in scholarly (peer reviewed) journals. There are various choices a user can make for each of the 16 databases aggregated in EBSCOhost.

The reason for using search limiters becomes obvious if a user does a general search and several thousand results are found. No one has the time to sift through that many results to find the best for a given search. The use of search limiters helps to refine the search results and produces a more manageable number of results.

Other useful features are available. It is possible to use a “preview pane” to look at individual records without having to leave the main search page. There is also a feature called “How to Cite” that provides details on how to cite articles using various bibliographic formats.