Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How do I gain access to the Academy’s library resources?

A. The easiest way to do this is to open up your course shell for any course you are taking at the Academy. Near the top of the home page there are several links to useful information. One of the links reads “Academy Online Library”. Click on this link and the library home page will appear.

Q. I constantly have trouble using the library databases to find relevant articles. Am I doing something wrong, or are the databases the Academy provides too limited?

A. The Academy subscribes to databases provided by Ebsco, Proquest and Gale. There are a number of other database providers in the marketplace. These three provide good coverage on the issues that our students are researching. Each of them has a slightly different focus. Students doing research would be well served to conduct the same search in all three databases rather than just using one.

To a certain extent this problem will be minimized in the next few months as the Academy library begins to use the First Search integrated search portal feature. This service will allow the library to set up our databases so that a user can conduct one search that will search all of its databases at once. This will eliminate the need for conducting multiple searches.

When conducting a database search the user should ALWAYS use the advanced search feature. This allows the user to search using Boolean logic. An advanced search allows the user to quickly narrow searches by using connector words to search the databases using keywords that are connected by subject. This is a great improvement over simply searching with no logic for results that contain any one of a list of keywords.

Q. In addition to the databases the library subscribes to are there other sources that can provide good search results?

A. Yes. On the Academy Online Library page there are several “free access databases” listed as links. These are databases that index topics relevant to courses taught at the Academy. They are simply available at no charge. One of these is PubMed Central. It is produced by the National Institute of Health and is a good source for articles dealing with health and wellness issues. Another is the Alabama Virtual Library. This database is available to all participating libraries in Alabama and has some excellent academic resources, such as Academic Search Premier. Students are strongly encouraged to check those resources out.

Q. I don’t understand the term “Boolean logic”. Where can I find some information about this?
A. There are several articles found on the Academy Online Library page for every course shell. The user can see the title to these articles contained in live links to PDF copies of the articles. One of these articles deals with Boolean Logic. In addition to explaining what this is, the article provides links to other sites that provide examples and explanations.

Q. I frequently find in conducting database searches that I can’t access full text copies of articles. This is a problem and I wonder what can be done about it?

A. As in anything, you get what you pay for. The Academy’s library, like most smaller libraries, must make decisions based on financial considerations as to what resources the library can offer. Typically in our databases about 1/3 to 2/5 of the articles found in online searches in databases are actually available there in full text format. The rest have abstracts, which are summaries of the articles.

There are things that users can do that are not particularly time consuming and can frequently result in full text versions of articles being found.

- Go to an internet search engine such as Google. Type in the full title of the article being sought. Many times someone will have posted the article on the internet for various reasons.
- Go the website for the journal where the article is found. Sometimes the site makes full text versions of articles available for free.
- Contact the Academy library staff. We can use interlibrary loan or other resources available to us and locate a full text version of the article. There are very few articles for which full text versions cannot be located in this manner. It is easy to email the Academy library staff.

Q. Are there quick and easy ways to find the correct way to cite sources using APA Style?

A. Yes. There is a link on the Academy Online Library page to the APA website. The site has a very good FAQ section. In each of the databases when results are pulled up for a search there are “buttons” that can be punched that will provide the proper citation for the article using several citation formats. There is an article on Academic Writing that can be linked to from the Academy Online Library page. This article, among other things, contains some advice on how to use APA Style format to cite different types of sources.

When using a database there is a “button” that is part of a record of an article found in a database search. Clicking on this button, usually referred to as “cite”, will provide the user with the citation format for the four leading formats used, including APA.

When in doubt the user can always contact the library via email with a request for citation help.

Q. Can I really get help with academic writing through my course shell?
Frequently Asked Questions

A. Yes. On every course shell there are several links on the upper right side of the course home screen. One of those links is to ACCESS. This link contains a large number of articles dealing with issues common to academic writing. What do I need to include in an annotated bibliography? How do I learn to use pronouns more effectively? Can I learn to avoid using overly long and complex sentences?

The above are just a few of the questions that use of the ACCESS tutorials can help with. This is perhaps the most underutilized resource available to Academy students.

Q. I’m really not sure how to even go about researching and writing academic papers. Is there any general help available to me in this area?

A. Yes. The ACCESS tutorials include help with academic writing. This help includes figuring out what “peer reviewed journals” are and why they are important in academic writing. In addition to the tutorials one of the links to articles on the Academy Online Library page links to an article that deals with the research process—what is involved and how does a person go about researching and writing an academic paper.

Q. Is there a resource that can help me find books written on topics that I am trying to do research on?

A. Yes. Go to the website, http://worldcat.org. This site contains information on around 40 million items that are in print in English. This site also is linked to the Library of Congress’ interlibrary loan program so that a user can find a library where a particular book can be located. A user can also go to http://amazon.com/books and find bibliographic information about books on any given topic that the user searches for.

Q. How can I contact a librarian? When I’m working on my classes it is frequently outside of normal business hours.

A. Users can email the library staff with questions. The general address is library@ussa.edu. Patty Wilson can be reached at plwilson@ussa.edu. Greg Tyler can be reached at gtyler@ussa.edu. Staff policy is that we try to respond to all inquiries within 18 hours.

Q. Is it possible to set up a training session with a library staff person?

A. Yes. Call the Academy at 251-626-3303. Ask for the library. A staff person can help you go to an appropriate page on the Academy Online Library page (e.g., the Ebscohost home page for searches) and then, while both staff person and user are looking at the same screen, can walk through a process that is giving the user problems.
Q. I am beginning work on my dissertation. I can’t find complete copies of dissertations online. What kind of help can the library staff provide me with?

A. Few Academy students pay Proquest to post their entire dissertations online. Most students across the country have abstracts published on the Theses and Dissertations database. Most libraries only keep one or two copies of dissertations and so are reluctant to loan out copies via interlibrary loan.

In the Academy Library we have electronic folders where we keep several complete dissertations completed by our students. Upon request we will email copies of some or all of those dissertations out to students. We do keep print copies of our students’ dissertations. Users can request that we copy and send out a dissertation and we will then quote a price. Proquest will send an unbound print copy of a dissertation out for about $35.00.

Q. Does the Academy library proctor exams?

A. Yes. Some of our students live close enough that they can come to campus and have exams proctored. We do not charge a fee for this service. We will proctor exams from other schools for a fee of $25.00.

Q. Can Academy students check books out from the library?

A. Yes. Our Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) can be found by clicking on the link found on the Academy Online Library page. A user who finds a book and wants to check it out that user can request it directly from the Academy library. We will mail the book to the student with a return due date noted. That student is then responsible for mailing the book back to us.

A student can also go to a library near his or her residence and use that library’s interlibrary loan service to request the book. The book will be sent to the requesting library and then checked out by that library to the student. The student then only has to return the book to that library.

Q. How can I find legal resources?

A. The databases we subscribe to do not index much in the way of legal resources. Our Proquest database does include Hein Online, which is a database of legal sources. There are resources available for free that do not require subscriptions to expensive database packages such as those sold by Westlaw:

- Findlaw.com is a free site that contains a legal glossary, information on state legal codes and other legal resources
- Most states make their state codes freely available online. As an example, the Alabama code can be found by using the keyword search “Code of Alabama”.
Frequently Asked Questions

- Copies of opinions of appellate court cases and articles about those cases can generally be found by doing an internet search using the name of the case or the citation information.
- Many law reviews are freely available online.
- *Black's Law Dictionary* is available online.
- Information about copyright law can be found at [http://copyright.gov](http://copyright.gov). There are a number of other sites that offer free information about copyright issues. These can be found by doing an internet search using the keywords “copyright law”.

**Q. What is Google Scholar and how can it help me with my research needs?**

**A.** Google Scholar is produced by Google. Users can type “Google Scholar” in their internet search box and the familiar Google screen will appear, but will say “Google Scholar”. Users can type in search queries in the search box. In the lower left corner of the screen there is a link that reads “Revert to old venerable look”. Click on that and to the right of the search box a link will appear that reads “advanced search”. Clicking on this allows a user to search Google Scholar using Boolean logic.

At this time Google indexes almost 500 peer reviewed journals in Google Scholar. To test the utility of the database open up Google Scholar and type “sport concussions” in the search box. Click the search button and check the results. This simple test will confirm that a user can find numerous useful articles using this resource.

**Q. What is a “peer reviewed journal”? How can I ensure that my searches yield results that are taken from peer reviewed journals?**

**A.** The term “peer reviewed journal” is really the same things as “scholarly journal” or “academic journal”. These are journals that will not publish an article until it has been reviewed and critiqued by one or more “field experts” who are said to be peers of the author submitting an article.

When an article is submitted to such a journal the editorial staff assigns a qualified peer to read and provide feedback on the submitted article. The article may be acceptable as originally submitted. It may need some editing and it may just be unacceptable. As this process of review unfolds all articles that are eventually published in the journal must pass this standard of review.

The databases provided for students can help in this process. In Ebscohost, for instance, there is a screen that allows a user to set search parameters. A user can click a box that reads “peer reviewed or scholarly journals”. When this is done the only results that will be shown for any search conducted during that session will be taken from peer reviewed journals.
Frequently Asked Questions

When an article appears in a peer reviewed journal the user can be assured that it meets high standards of writing and that it utilizes the proper research methodologies. Please note that all databases index non-peer reviewed sources such as newspapers or news magazines as well as scholarly sources.

Q. Does the library have any resources that can help students find jobs?

A. The library receives on a regular basis a newsletter from a group called the Sports Careers Institute. These newsletters contain job listings and contact information on a number of jobs in professional and college sports. In addition the newsletters promote resources that provide information to help students develop job hunting skills. The library keeps these digital newsletters and can send out copies to anyone who sends in an email expressing interest.

Q. Can a student search the holdings of the Library of Congress?

A. Yes. Go to http://catalog.loc.gov. This is the online home of the Library of Congress. You will find that you can perform various kinds of searches that will bring up books held by the Library of Congress. You can then use the OCLC feature of worldcat.org (see FAQ above) and locate libraries that have that item. The LOC site will provide a user with all of the bibliographic information needed to search for a book.

Q. How can I find demographic data quickly?

A. The U.S. Census Bureau has made much of its data available to the public online. Go to http://www.census.gov/main/www/access.html and browse the links that are provided for access to various kinds of statistical information. This link is also available on the Academy Online Library page.

Q. Is Wikipedia an acceptable source when research papers?

A. Strictly speaking, no. Wikipedia was founded in 1994. In the past few years the site has developed procedures that limit who can edit and add material. This has increased the reliability of the site. It is in no way a peer reviewed source. That does not mean that Wikipedia has no role to play in doing research for academic papers. Wikipedia can provide some general background information on a person, a school, an intellectual concept, etc. A student beginning to research a topic can often get some good leads for further research by reading an article on Wikipedia.

Students should be very careful about citing Wikipedia as a source for information used in a paper. Wikipedia is a background source of information and should not be cited as a direct source for information.