



## Libraries

### A Brief Guide to Searching ERIC

ERIC, the *Education Resources Information Center* sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, is the most widely used index to journal articles and documents (educational reports, project descriptions, curriculum guides, dissertations, etc.) for research in education and related fields. In addition to providing citations and abstracts for every item in the database, ERIC currently includes the full text of many documents (EDs) from 1982 to present. (ERIC Digests are available in full text from 1980-2003.) The Dobbs Ferry and Bronx campus libraries have many additional ERIC documents available on microfiche. Full-text journal articles (EJs) for recent years are included in the ERIC database, and many of the indexed articles that are not available in full text are available in journals to which the Mercy College libraries subscribe. Check the PERIODICALS LOCATOR on the library web page for a complete listing.

#### Search Strategy:

**(1) Write down your topic as a statement or question and identify the key words or phrases in your statement/question**

For example, if you are interested in finding recent information on methods for teaching students with autism, your key terms would be *autism* and *teaching methods*.

**(2) Type your search term(s) in the “Search for” boxes**

Enter each of your terms (use quotation marks around phrases) in a separate box.

*NOTE: If you would like to search in a specific field such as title, author, descriptor (subject heading) or journal name, select the desired field from the pull-down menu.*

**(3) Examine the search limit choices by “Publication Type(s)” and “Publication Date.” Select the limits you want and click on the “Search” button near the bottom of the screen**

For example, if you wanted journal articles only, you could select “Journal Articles” from the pull down menu for “**Publication Type**.” The publication type “Reports—Research” will limit a search to research studies in both documents (EDs) and articles (EJs). **NOTE:** Selecting more than one limit will retrieve one or another of your limit choices but not necessarily all of them together.

Because search results display in order of “relevancy,” it is often helpful to enter date limits in the “**Publication Date**” boxes—especially if you want to retrieve recent articles. Do not select “Full Text,” unless you are interested in full-text documents or reports (EDs). The number of full-text journal articles in ERIC is quite limited.

**(4) If items are found that match your term(s) and limit(s), a list of results will display, with a summary of your search and the number of results indicated near the top of the screen. The items will be in order of “relevancy.”**

When you see an item of interest, click the item title to see all the available information about the item, including subject headings (“Descriptors”) and full abstract. *If a document or article is available in full text, this will be noted under “Full-Text Availability Options.” Click “ERIC Full Text” to display the full article or document.*

*(Do not select “Publisher’s Web Site,” as this will take you to a page that will ask you to pay for the item. “Find in a Library” provides listings of libraries that carry the item, but it does not offer online full text access to the material.)*

To the right of many items will be a list of “Related Items” that discuss similar topics.

*NOTE: To further limit your search results, click “Search Within Results” near the top of a screen, make your limit selections, and click the “Search” button located at the bottom of the limits page.*

**(5)** You can **print a single citation/abstract** by clicking “Add” at the right of the item, then clicking “1 item(s) in My Clipboard” above the results list, and on the next screen clicking “Print citations” and selecting your print format of choice. You can also **mark a group of citations to print or to email**. To do this, click “Add” next to each item of interest to you in the search results list. To view and print or email these citations/abstracts, click “items in My Clipboard” and follow on-screen instructions.

**(6)** If the item is an **article** (EJ) not available in ERIC in full-text, check the ***Periodicals Locator*** on the library web page to see if the libraries subscribe to the journal that contains the article you selected. Mercy carries many of journals indexed in ERIC. If we do not have the journal you need, however, we can usually get a photocopy of an article through our Interlibrary Loan service.

If the item is a **document** (ED) not available in ERIC in full-text, the libraries own the entire collection of available level 1 and level 2 ERIC documents on microfiche. Dobbs Ferry has documents from 1981 through July 2004 and the Bronx from 1966 through July 2004.

### **Searching ERIC using subject headings from the Thesaurus**

*Although there may not always be a subject heading in ERIC that describes your search concept(s), a search using standardized subject terms from the ERIC Thesaurus will often produce more accurate and relevant results than a search using keywords.*

To identify subject headings to use in your search, click the **Thesaurus** tab near the top of the ERIC search screen, enter one of your search terms in the “Search for” box on the next screen, and click the “Search” button. If your term is found, you will be taken automatically to a listing of relevant subject headings. Clicking on a heading will often produce a definition of the term (Scope note) and related headings to consider. Write down the subject heading(s) of interest to you and enter them in the “Search for” box(es) on the Advanced Search screen.

As an alternate approach, you can access the thesaurus and choose and add thesaurus terms to your search by selecting “Descriptors” from the pull-down “Search for” menu on the Advanced Search page, pressing “Thesaurus” next to the adjoining text box, and following on-screen instructions.

*A link to brief “Search Tips” is to the right of the search boxes on the Advanced Search screen.*

*“Search Help,” which provides more in depth explanation and guidance for using ERIC, is a link at the bottom of many ERIC screens.*

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