

Prepared by Alec Sonsteby, MS, MBA, library faculty (5/21)

Where do I begin my library research?

To begin your search, visit the library homepage at: <https://library.metrostate.edu/> Use either the **OneSearch** search box or click on **Databases A-Z** and choose one of the sources listed below.

The best library databases for criminal justice research

The primary library databases for **peer reviewed journals** articles (scholarly research) in the area of criminal justice include (in rough order of usefulness):

1. **Criminal Justice Abstracts:** Premier index of peer reviewed research and trade publications. [Not full text. Links to full text in other library databases.]
2. **Sage Full Text Journal Collection:** Includes collection of **full-text** criminology journals.
3. **PsycINFO:** Important social science research index, covering the field of psychology. [Not full text. Links to full text in other library databases.]
4. **Sociological Abstracts:** Another important social science research index. [Not full text. Links to full text in other library databases.]

Two of the best library databases for locating **news article** (not peer reviewed) are:

5. **ProQuest U.S. Newsstream:** Provides access to **full-text** access to regional, national, and international newspapers, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Star Tribune*, and *Pioneer Press*.
6. **Ethnic NewsWatch:** Full-text newspapers, magazines, and journals of the ethnic and minority press.

If you are looking for **statistics**:

7. **Statistical Abstract of the United States (ProQuest):** THE place to start for statistics. Begin by looking under **Section 5: Law Enforcement, Courts, and Prisons**. Take care when reading the data. Also, note the source of each statistical table: oftentimes these sources can provide you with even more detailed information.

5 key search techniques

1. Search terms:

- a. Use as few terms as possible when searching. Break your research question, problem statement, or thesis into 3-5 concepts and generate lists of related words for each. Use these lists to try searching various combinations of terms.
- b. The more specific the terms, the better.
- c. If little or nothing comes up, try searching with synonyms or closely related terms (e.g., “capital punishment” instead of “death penalty”) or with broader concepts (e.g., “drugs” instead of the name of a specific drug).

2. Phrase searching

- a. Use quotation marks around two or more words in a phrase, e.g. “gun control” or “police brutality”.
- b. What this does: Narrows search (fewer search results).

3. Limiters

- a. Check boxes for **Peer Reviewed** or restrict your search to a **specific date or date range**.
- b. What this does: Narrows search (fewer search results).

4. Truncation

- a. Use an asterisk after the root of a word to simultaneously search words with the same root, e.g. truncat* matches truncate, truncation, truncated, truncates, etc.
- b. What this does: Expands search (more search results).

5. Boolean

- a. Use the operators OR or NOT between your search terms and phrases, e.g. **Minnesota AND (“capital punishment” OR “death penalty”)**
- b. What this does: AND narrows (fewer results); OR expands (more results); NOT excludes (fewer results).

I’m trying to research about a particular city/county/state, but I can’t find anything.

Students often are interested in topics with a focus on a particular city, county, or state.

Typically, there is **no** academic research available for such a specific geographic scope. So instead think about how other existing research about your topic may apply, and then supplement that academic research with news sources, like newspapers; government information from city, county, or state websites, e.g. city police department, county sheriff’s office, or state crime or public safety agencies; and information from community or neighborhood organization websites.

Pro tip: Browse government websites

This is not an exhaustive list of possible sources, but rather places where I usually start looking.

1. **National Criminal Justice Reference Service** (A-Z index of CJS topics, with links to government documents, statistics, and other research): <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs>
2. **Minnesota law** (click on Statutes by Topic): <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/pubs/>

How do I format an APA paper? How do I properly format APA citations?

Check out the library's citation resource page: <http://libguides.metrostate.edu/cite-sources>

I need help! Whom do I contact?

Contact the Reference & Research Desk at (651) 793-1614, via email at library.services@metrostate.edu, or through the chat box on the library homepage. Librarians are available Monday through Thursday, 10AM – 7PM and Fridays and Sundays, 1PM – 5PM.