Library Catalog: Tips and Tricks

What is the library catalog?

Library catalogs are used to find material held by a library, including books and journal subscriptions. Catalogs do not include access to individual articles. See the section on Summon for help finding articles.

UMSL is part of MERLIN, the library catalog of the four University of Missouri campuses. Our catalog defaults to searching only UMSL items, but you can use “All Merlin” to search all four campuses at once.

There is also a “MOBIUS Search” option from the catalog. This allows you to request books from most of the academic libraries in the state of Missouri. See the end of this guide for more details.

You can also log into “My Library Account” from the libraries’ homepage or the catalog to renew books or track the status of items you have requested.

Selecting a search option

To use the catalog effectively it is important to understand the different types of searches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I Know . . .</th>
<th>Search . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a topic that I need information on.</td>
<td>Keyword or Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a few words from the title of a book.</td>
<td>Keyword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the exact title of a book.</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the name of an author of a book.</td>
<td>Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the title of a journal, periodical, newspaper.</td>
<td>Journal, Magazine, Newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td>material on reserve for a class.</td>
<td>Course Reserves</td>
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Each search type is described below. Search tips and techniques are at the end of this guide.
Types of Searches

**Keyword:** The best general search option. Searches in multiple areas of the records, including titles, subject headings, and notes. As you find relevant results, look at the Subject Headings on each record to get an idea of other search terms to use.

**Subject:** Only searches the official Library of Congress Subject Headings. These subject headings represent the overall content of the book. They are not always easy to guess. Type in the anticipated subject to retrieve a list of possibilities to view. Or, use a title or keyword search and then look at the subjects assigned to a particular item; subject headings in the records are linked and will lead you to other materials on the same topic.

**Journal, Magazine, Newspaper Title begins with:** Use to find periodicals owned by the library in print and online. This option does not allow you to search for individual articles.

You can also use the “Journals by Title” option from the libraries’ home page.

**Course Reserves:** Items placed on reserve can be searched by the course number, the course name, or the name of the professor (last name, first).

**Need Help?** Call the Reference Desk at 314-516-5060 or email it at e-ref@umsl.edu. You can also click the “Help” link from the catalog for answers to common questions.

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Search techniques

**Truncation**

To find all variations of a word, use an asterisk * after the root word. Use a single asterisk * to represent up to 5 characters, or double asterisks ** for more than 6 characters.

*Examples:* interview* retrieves interview, interviews, interviewing, etc.

math** retrieves math, mathematics, etc.

**Combining Terms**

Multiple words typed next to each other without a connector will be searched as a phrase.

To narrow your search and see fewer results, join terms using the word "and."

*Example:* employment and interview* retrieves records containing both search terms.

To expand your search, link terms using the word "or."

*Example:* laws or legislation retrieves records where one or both search terms are found.

To exclude terms, precede them with the words "and not."

*Example:* missouri and not history retrieves records containing the first term but not the second.
Searching a Phrase

To search several words next to each other, place the words inside double quotes.

Example: “civil war” retrieves only records that use that exact phrase.

Proximity

Use near to specify words close to each other, in any order. Use within # to specify words within a set range of each other. The symbol # may stand for any number.

Example: social work within 10 servic* retrieves records with both terms in any order as long as they are not separated by more than 10 words.

Searching with Parentheses

Parentheses can be used to combine different search techniques.

Example: employment and (laws or legislation) retrieves records containing the first term and at least one or both of the terms enclosed in parentheses.

Catalog Features
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature:</th>
<th>Function:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Request</strong></td>
<td>Request a book from a library for pickup at the circulation desk. You will need to know your SSO ID and password. When requesting through MOBIUS, make sure to select “MERLIN” as your “Pickup Cluster.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Return to Browse</strong></td>
<td>Returns you to the list of main results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Modify Search</strong></td>
<td>Add additional restrictions to your search, like publication year, material type, words in title, author, subject, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Modify Search" /></td>
<td><em>Example:</em> After doing a keyword search for <em>shakespeare and theater</em>, “Modify Search” is clicked and the material type is limited to EBOOKS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. MOBIUS Search</strong></td>
<td>Repeats your search in the MOBIUS catalog, which searches most of the academic libraries in the state of Missouri.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Change MERLIN location</strong></td>
<td>Use the same search but look at all four UM campus libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Nearby on shelf</strong></td>
<td>Shows the items located next to the selected book on the shelf. Great for finding related material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Subjects</strong></td>
<td>Click on a subject heading to pull up all catalog records that are listed under that topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ebooks:</strong></td>
<td>You can find individual ebooks in the Library Catalog. Search result lists will indicate the material type using the icon for E-Books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Ebooks" /></td>
<td>To search only for ebooks, select the “Advanced” Search tab. Under “Add Limits (Optional)” scroll down until you see the box for “Material Type.”</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Entire collections of ebooks may be accessed from the Database list. To see these collections, from the library homepage click “Articles/Databases,” “By Subject and Type,” and then under “Databases by Type” click “E-Books.” These collections include:

- Credo Academic Core
- eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)
- ebrary Business and Economics
- Gale Virtual Reference Library
- Oxford Reference
- Safari Books Online

The new EBSCO eBook Collection alone has over 100,000 ebooks. Happy reading!

**MOBIUS:**

MOBIUS provides access to a statewide network of libraries. As an UMSL student, you can request books from any of them! To search MOBIUS, click on the “MOBIUS Search” button from the catalog, or go to http://searchmobius.org/.

![MOBIUS interface](image)

The interface looks a little different, but searching in MOBIUS works the same way as searching our catalog. Click “Request” to have a book sent here for checkout.

**Summon:**

**Summon** is a Google-like library search engine. Unlike the catalog, it searches for individual articles across most of our databases. In addition, it also functions as a catalog search. Your results will include articles, print books, ebooks, government documents, and more.

Summon searches most but not all of our resources. Use our specialized databases to search only a specific area of research. Visit our Research Help page or consult with a Reference Librarian if you do not find what you need or for a more comprehensive search.

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