Searching IBSS

This guide is designed to help you search IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences) effectively but many of the following principles will also help you search other databases. IBSS provides details of articles and other documents from across thousands of reputable social science journals.

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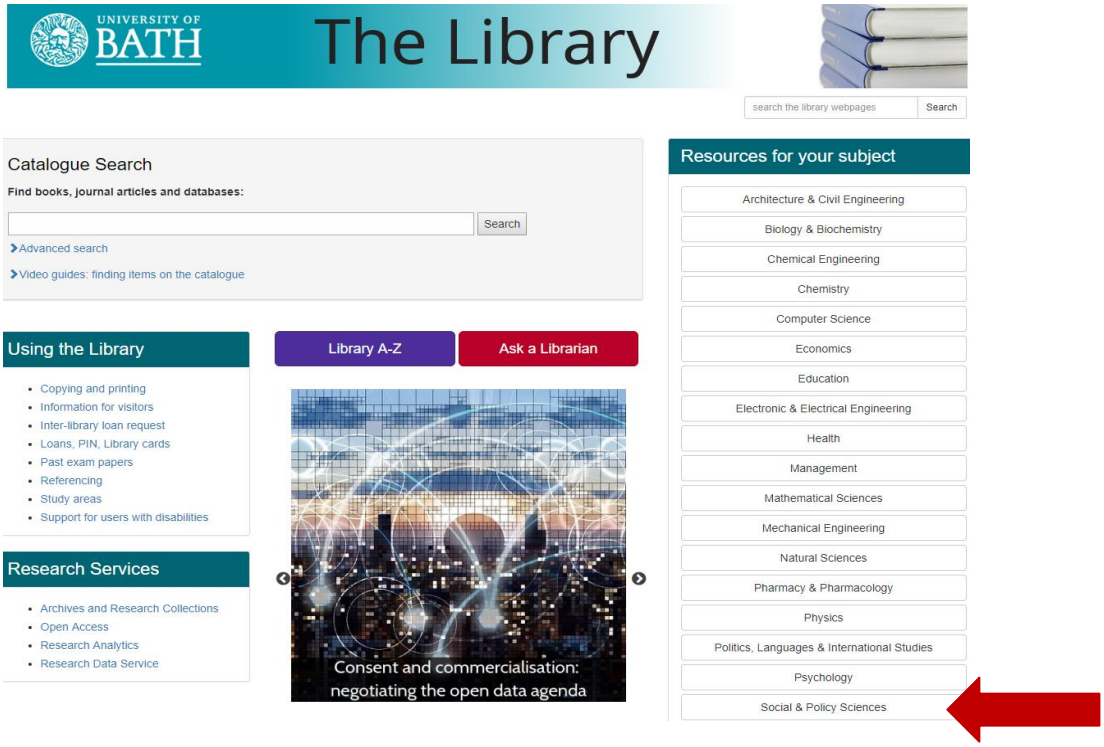
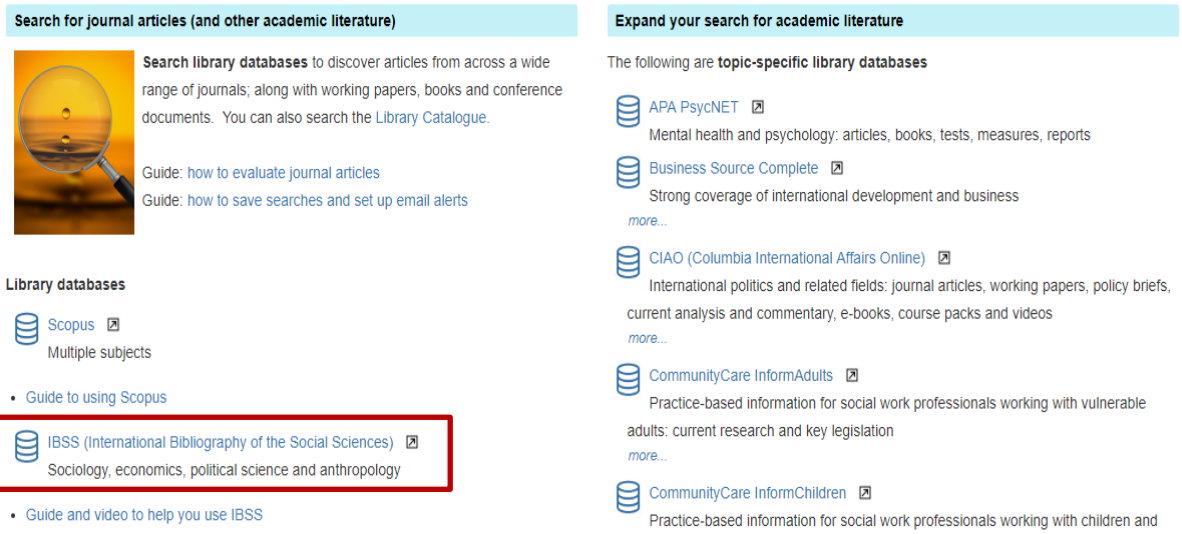
1. Accessing IBSS

a. You need to access IBSS through the Library website to get full access. Go the Library homepage: https://library.bath.ac.uk/home - and click **Social & Policy Sciences** (in Resources for your Subject).



b. Within the Library's Social & Policy Sciences section, go to the 'Search the Literature' page and click the IBSS link. **Please note the link to a video demonstration** (to the right of the link to IBSS).



2. Thinking about search terms – read this section before searching IBSS

2a Search terms

When you conduct a basic IBSS search, the database looks for your search terms within the titles and abstracts (summaries) of journal articles. You will need to **think carefully** about your search terms **before** entering them into IBSS.

Take a look at your assignment/research title. Identify the most important words or phrases that appear within the title i.e. those words that distinguish it from any *other* assignment title.

For this exercise, please either use the following title as an example, or use your own:
"Explore issues related to students and time management."

2b. Sub-themes

The following are the most important words/phrases that appear within the title above. Each represents a separate **sub-theme** that relates to the overall theme of the title:

Students
Time management

2c.Thinking about alternative words and phrases

Think about the potential range of alternative words and phrases that could be used to describe each separate sub-theme. Consider terminology that you already know from **academic books, journal articles, lectures and tutorials**, as well as more commonly-used language.

Why do this? This will help you decide which words to enter into IBSS' search boxes.
Also, if you enter a large range of relevant search terms, you are more likely to **increase the number of useful search results.**

Useful tip: You might find it helpful to write down your alternative words/phrases in separately themed rows as follows:

Sub-theme	**Alternative words/phrases**	**Any others?** If so: add below
Students	Undergraduates, Postgraduates	
Time management	Managing time	

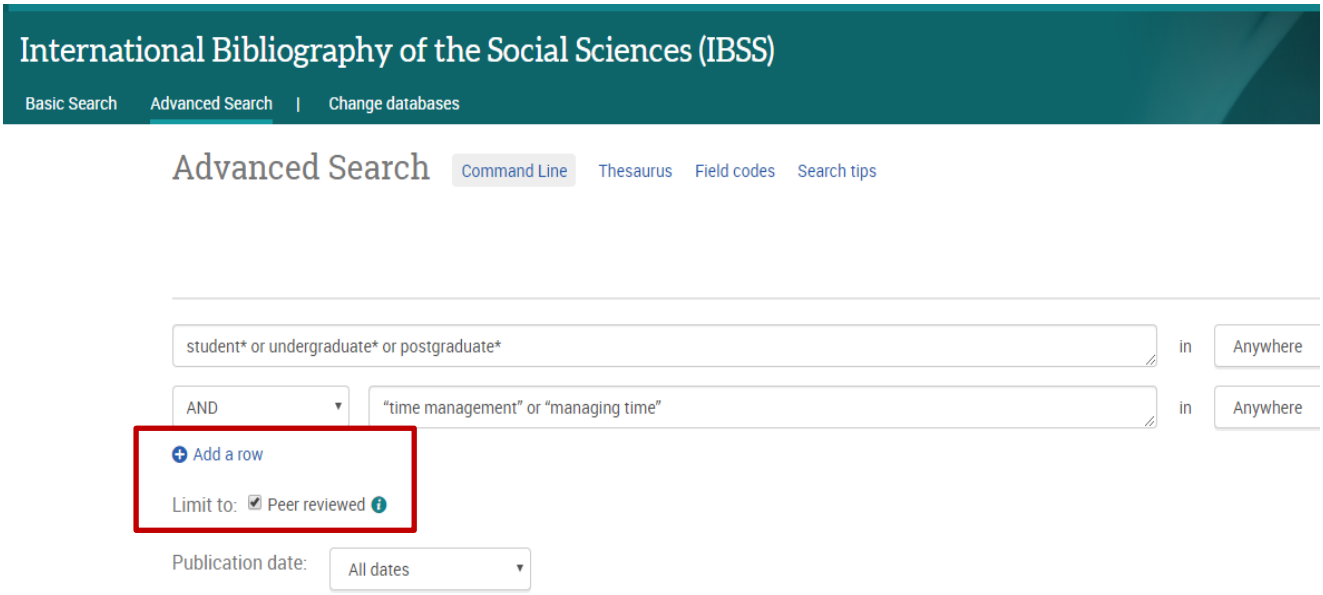
3. Entering your search terms

3a. Organising your search terms

Enter each set of search terms (i.e. each sub-theme) into its own separate search box. Ensure that **or** appears between each word/phrase. For an explanation of the asterisks and speech marks, refer to section 3b of this guide.

1st search box	student* **or** undergraduate* **or** postgraduate*
2nd search box	"time management" **or** "managing time"

This is how the search terms would appear in IBSS:



Peer-reviewed limit: note the option in the example above to limit your results to articles/documents from peer-reviewed journals. Peer-reviewed journals only include articles that have been approved for publication by experts in the relevant subject field.

Add a row: also note this option in the example above. If you are entering search terms for three or more sub-themes, you can click "add a row" for each additional search box as required.

3b. Useful search tips!

Truncating words using an asterisk

As in the examples above, try using an asterisk where relevant – this might help increase your number of search results. You can add this at the end of the stem of a word to find variations – for example:

manag* finds **manage, manages, managing and management**

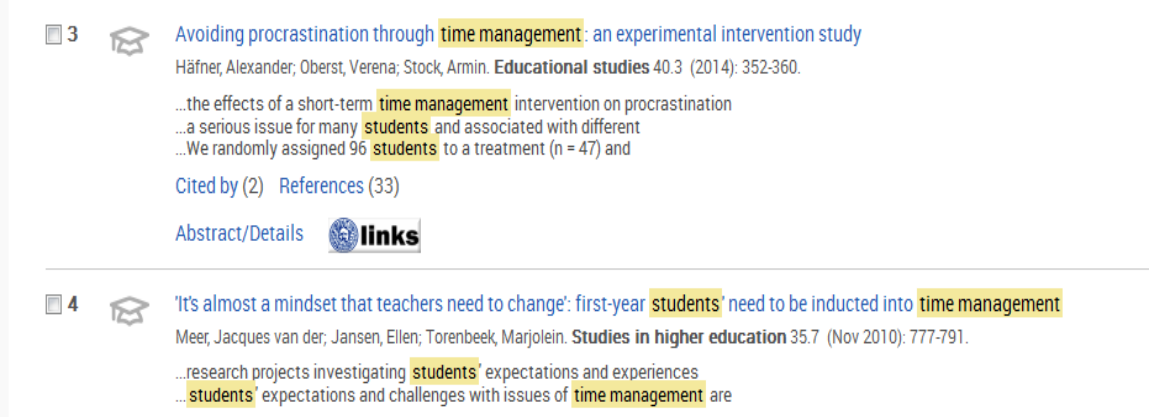
Searching for a specific phrase

You can enter **"speech marks"** around a phrase so that IBSS searches for only those words in exactly the same order - for example: **"manag* time"**

Click Search: write down the number of results that you retrieve……

3c. Search results

The following is an example of a couple of IBSS search results.



Re-sorting search results: you can re-sort your results in order of those that are “most recent” rather than most “relevant”. To do this, change the “sort” option to the left and just above near the first search result.

4. Refining your search terms

4a. Retrieving too few results?

Click the **Modify Search** link (just above your search results, on the right-hand side of the screen) If you are only then see a single search box, then click the **Advanced** link (above the search box).

Consider whether any further terms exist on your topic and if so, add these to the relevant search boxes (again entering the word **or** in between multiple terms). Try another search. If you still retrieve few results, search more broadly on the topic. You could so this by identifying the least significant of the sub-themes and excluding the associated search terms from your next search.

4b. Retrieving too many irrelevant results?

Change the ‘anywhere’ setting next to each search box, to ‘anywhere but full-text’

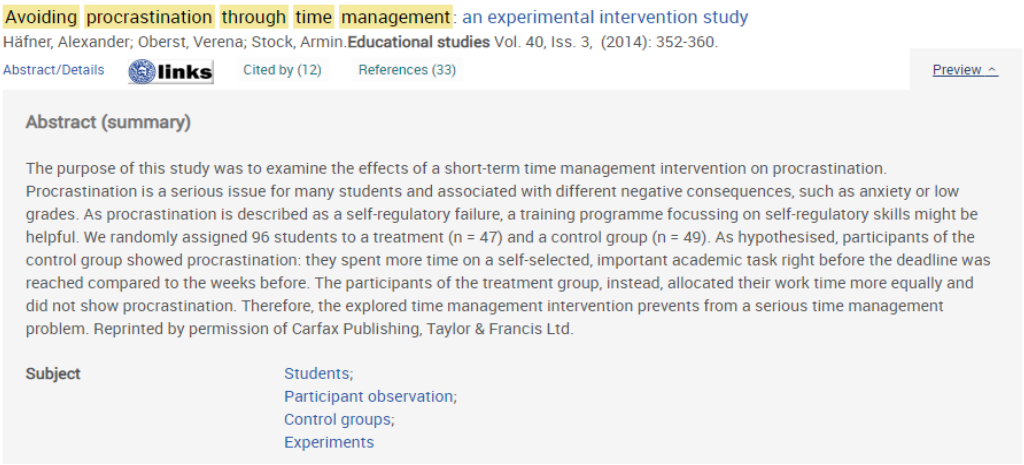
Click the **Modify Search** link (just above your search results, on the right-hand side of the screen).

Consider whether any of your search terms are of only marginal relevance – if so, remove these and try another search. If you continue to retrieve many irrelevant results, consider whether your topic contains a further sub-theme. If so, enter the search term(s) associated with that sub-theme in a further search box.

5. Engaging with abstracts (summaries)

Click the Preview button to the right of any search results in which you are interested. This will enable you to read an abstract. Abstracts summarise the findings and methodologies of an article. Note the terminology used in abstracts and any subject terms listed.

By increasing your awareness of relevant terminology, this may help you modify/expand your search terms and in turn, help you retrieve a greater number of relevant results.

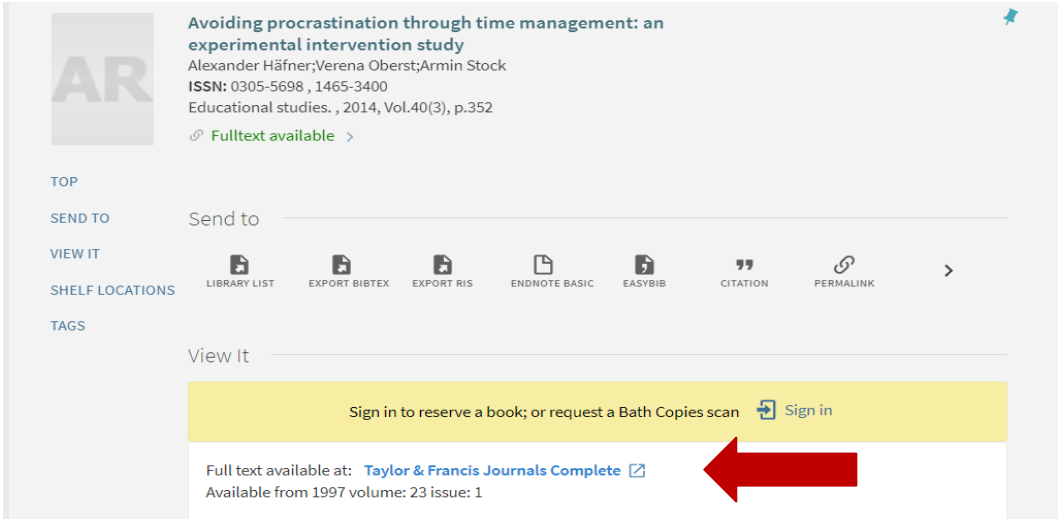


6. Checking if you can view the full article

6a. Checking online availability

To find out whether or not the full text of an article is available for you to read, click the blue and white 'Links' button:

This button will take you to a "links" page which will provide a link to the full article if, for example, the Library subscribes to the relevant journal.



6b. If the full article is NOT available online:

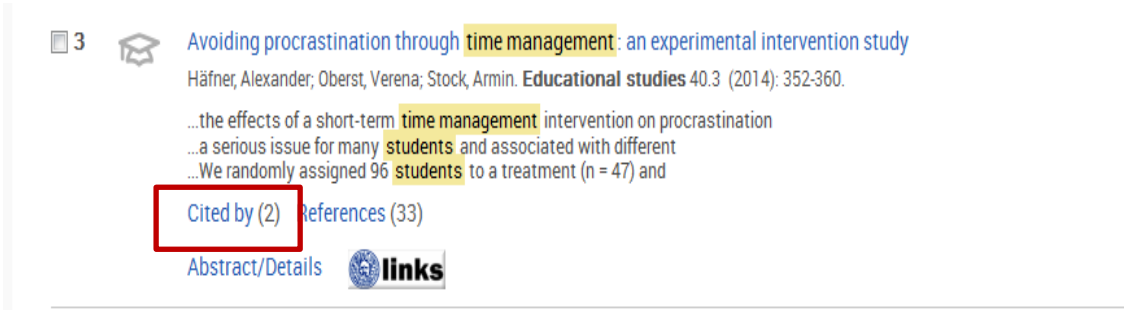
Search the Library Catalogue via the Library homepage: https://library.bath.ac.uk/home

Search for the journal title (not the article title). If we provide the journal and its Catalogue record states 'copies available', we provide a print copy (click 'copies available' to find out if we hold the relevant year/volume/issue). If we do not provide the article in any format, and it is potentially important for your work, please contact your Subject Librarian for advice.

7. *Broadening your perspective on a topic*

7a. 'Cited by' links

Back to your search results: Note the words **cited by** (and a corresponding number) which appear within some of the results. This tells you the number of times an individual article has been cited/referenced by other articles (indexed by IBSS). You can click on this number to connect to the IBSS records of these other articles.



By viewing and evaluating "citing articles", rather than evaluating an article in isolation, you will broaden your perspective on a topic. This is **good practice** as it may help you demonstrate an understanding of how a research area has developed and as a result, you might get **higher marks.**

7b. References

Note: some results provide a link to an article's own **references**. You could take a look at these and follow-up some of the articles and other sources that the author(s) has cited. Again, this will help broaden your perspective topic, but it may also help develop your understanding of the citing article.

8. *Saving/emailing results*

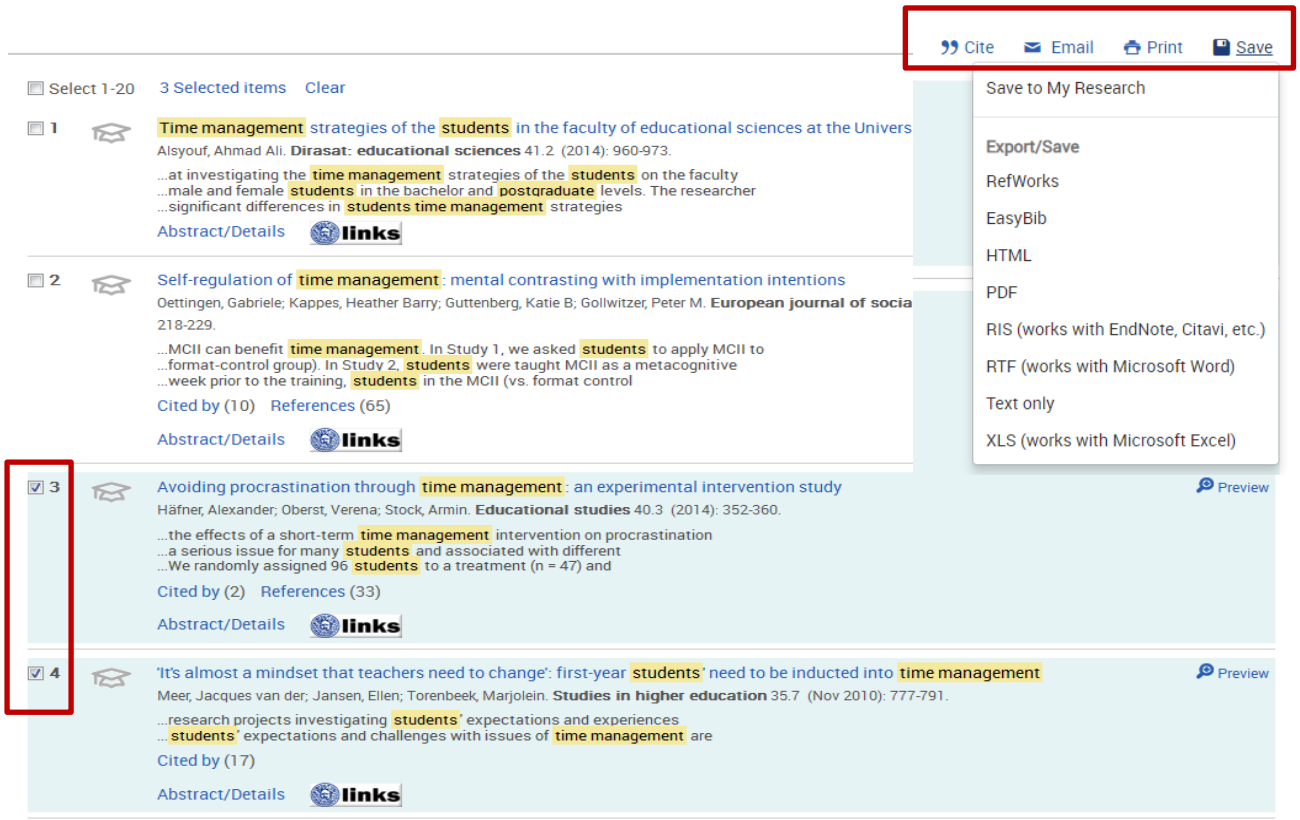
a. It is good practice to select any results of interest and save them as a list (this involves saving the

IBSS records rather than the full articles themselves). This will help you when you need information for referencing your sources.

b. Click/select the box next to any individual result(s) of interest.

c. Click the **envelope icon** above or email them. Also note the options in the "more" menu. You could,for example, save them in HTML format to a memory stick. It is good practice to save multiple copies so that you have "back-ups" in the event of losing a copy.

d. **Note**: to retrieve your list of results the next time you enter IBSS, click 'save' and then 'Save to My Research'. To register to use My Research, click on the icon of a person's head in the right hand corner of the screen (this is also where you retrieve your lists of results in the future).



Try searching other databases as well e.g. Scopus. No single database provides details of all articles.

If you would like any further support in using this database, please contact your Subject Librarian.

Peter Bradley: 17/10/2019

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