

DATABASE ACTIVITY

The purpose of this assignment is to familiarize you with the periodical databases available on-line through TBR libraries. Each library has a slightly different set of databases, but JSTOR, one of the best for historical research, should be available at all TBR libraries. (If not, remember that you also have access to the course instructor's home library. See "References" page for instructions on how to gain access or contact the instructor.) If you have problems accessing any of these databases, contact the instructor or the library.

1. Identify a topic and at least two key words or phrases. (For example, if your topic were gender roles in Shakespeare, your key words would be "William Shakespeare" and "gender" and maybe also "women.") For this assignment you can try out the topic that you'd like to do for your research paper, or you can explore another topic. If you can't think of a topic, try one of the following topics: slavery in Athens, manumission in Rome, Muslim slaves in Christian lands.
2. List the three most promising articles (not book reviews) from a key-word search in JSTOR. Format them as you would in a bibliography (JSTOR gives the necessary information but not quite the way that you would want to list a source in a research paper). Note that you should avoid very old articles (before about 1950 or so). If you use the "Advanced Search" feature, you can define your terms more exactly, also check off just "articles" so as to avoid book reviews, and define dates (I usually do so by year, with the current year as the ending date).
3. Identify one other database available at your library and run a key-word search on the same topic, then list the three most promising articles (different from the JSTOR results), again formatted as you would in a bibliography. (Some good databases to look for are Ebsco Host and Historical Abstracts, but any database with full-text periodicals would be appropriate.)
4. Using JSTOR, find two reviews of Orlando Patterson's Slavery and Social Death and give full citations for each. The Advanced Search will help as you can select only reviews, thus excluding articles.
5. Write a short paragraph describing your search process and its results. Points to include would be how you selected your search terms, whether you had to change search terms, and how the articles you retrieved differed from what you might have found in other sources such as books or open internet pages (consider endnotes/footnotes, technical language, length, narrowness of topic, type of argument made, and other distinguishing characteristics).