A Guide to Accessing Academic Literature

This guide has been compiled for the benefit of educators by the Research Team of the English Language Institute of Singapore.
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Introduction

This guide is written for those of us who do not have easy access to university libraries such as Libris, the library at the National Institute of Education (NIE).

Possible libraries

Education officers (EOs) have a choice of two ‘sets’ of libraries, (1) the MOE set (READ@Academy and OPAL), and (2) the National Library Board (NLB).

In the case of READ@Academy and OPAL, EOs have automatic membership but will need to show their MOE credentials in order to borrow books. The READ@Academy provides access to the hard copy MOE library located at the AST campus at Malan Road. OPAL provides access to online material.

In the case of NLB, you will need to become a member. Citizens can do this online. Non-citizens will need to visit a physical library in order to join although subsequent transactions can all be done online. Once you are a member, your individual password will allow you access to all the resources (including e-books, e-journals, etc.). There are a number of possible ways into the NLB collection but one of the easiest is through ‘OneSearch’ as this searches through all the NLB sources, including their e-journal collection, hard copy books as well as e-books. The URL is http://search.nlb.gov.sg/

Which is best?

Both the MOE set (READ@Academy and OPAL) and the NLB have improved a great deal over the last few years and either will generally meet your needs. There are differences as you might expect as their intended audiences are different. The MOE set is designed to serve the teaching community while the NLB service is there for the whole community. The resulting differences include, for example, the READ@Academy book collection focus on professional texts against the NLB large collection of novels, children’s books, etc. If your focus is educational research, you may prefer to use the MOE set. If you are a teacher in school and/or a parent, you may prefer to focus on NLB as you can then get materials for your children.

The two online journal collections (on OPAL and on the NLB website) use an EBSCOhost search engine and so their interfaces have a lot in common. However, while there is a common core of databases that they search for articles, there are some differences. For example, OPAL does not access the ProQuest database but NLB does. If you don’t find what you want on one set (MOE’s or NLB’s), you can then switch to trying the other.
READ@Academy Library Services

The READ@Academy library (one of the two services in the MOE set) is located on the second level of Block A of the Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST). In many ways, it is a standard library with hard copy books, and some journals and newspapers. It also has desks to work at and rooms for conferencing. However, it is unique in that it focuses on education. You can search the catalogue online from the library’s home page: https://readacademy.moe.edu.sg/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/OPAC/HOME.

READ@Academy also has two computers loaded with the following software:

1. **IBM SPSS** (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) (Base & Standard modules) – Software for quantitative data analysis

2. **NVivo 10** – Software for qualitative data analysis

Check the facilities page: (https://readacademy.moe.edu.sg/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/OPAC/XFacilities) for full details

To use the software, you will need to visit READ@Academy during opening hours, which are from 8:30 am to 6:00 pm (Mondays to Fridays). The library is closed Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays.

Finally, if you are teaching in a school and cannot make the time to visit READ@Academy at AST, you can still borrow from the library and arrange for the books to be delivered to your school. Check the details on the School Delivery page: (https://readacademy.moe.edu.sg/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/OPAC/XSchoolDeliveryService).
Online journals through OPAL

One of the most convenient ways of looking for relevant journal articles is through OPAL, the other service in the MOE set. You can log onto OPAL and click on ‘Search’ and search all databases that MOE subscribes to in one go. Here is how to do it.

1. Log onto OPAL. (If you use Internet Explorer and PDFs get blocked, follow the procedures given in the next section on page 6.)
2. Under the OPAL logo, you will see a ‘Search OPAL’ field. Click on the down arrow (▼) and a second option (Search Journals) will appear.
3. Click on ‘Search Journals’, enter the search text into the field and then click on the red symbol for ‘Search’ ( ).

(Alternatively, you can do the same thing by going to Resources and then clicking on Online Journals.)

4. You will be taken to the Basic search tab of the results page. In the example to the right, you will see the search engine has found almost half a million articles – more than we can possibly read so we need to ‘refine the results’ using the column on the right.
5. To choose the filters, click on the tick boxes or words next to them. In the fourth graphic, you will see that the filters chosen (circled in red) are Subject (education), Source Type (Academic Journals) and Geography (Singapore). As a result, the number of results has dropped to 63 – somewhat more manageable.

6. For some categories, such as Geography, where the list can be long, only the first five in the list are shown. To see the option you want, you may need to click on the down arrow (circled in blue in the graphic) to see the full set of choices.

7. If you would like to use even more filtering options, click on the ‘Advanced’ tab under ‘Online Journals’.

Once you have your list of articles, you can click on ‘More Info’ just below each item in the list to see such things as an abstract. Alternatively, you can click on the title of the article to be taken to the database where the article is available. Below is the database page for one article.

In the central column, you can see details of the article. In the left column, there is a link to a PDF version of the article. In the right column, there are a number of functions that allow you to, among other things, copy or download a reference in the correct format (‘Cite’ or ‘Export’). (ELIS uses the ‘APA6 – Sentence Case’ format for references and citations.)

In most cases, clicking on the PDF icon will take you to the PDF file, which you can download. For some publishers such as Taylor & Francis shown here, clicking on the icon will take you to the publisher’s website from where you can access the file.
The EBSCOhost listing

Near the top of the webpage in the previous section, you will find the option ‘Advanced Search’ (that we have marked in red). If you click on the ‘Advanced Search’ and enter a search value such as ‘Service learning using English language teaching’, you will be moved to the EBSCOhost native listing as below:

Notice that the filters are now on the left. Just as in the earlier screen, we can use the filters to make our listing more relevant. We can limit, for example, by geography, subject, availability of the full text and review status. This same EBSCOhost listing is used by NLB and this makes using this listing particularly useful. We will look at it in more detail in the NLB section below.

Cure for blocked PDFs

If you are using Internet Explorer on an MOE computer, the fixed protection level may block the download of PDF files. While you probably cannot change the protection level (without administrator rights), there is a way round the problem.

Follow the procedures given in the previous section (page 4) to search your selected database. Once you have your results, click on the article you are interested in. If the PDF does not download as you expect, look for a blue icon in the browser bar and click on it.
You should get the following message:

![Message box](image)

Click on the button ‘Turn off ActiveX Filtering’ and the PDF file will download. In future, when you use this same site, you should have no problems.
National Library Board One Search page

The National Library Board One Search page (http://search.nlb.gov.sg/) provides a way of searching the whole of NLB for material on a particular topic. In the opening screen below, we can see the materials range from books through newspapers to e-journals. This massive range of material is the advantage to using NLB, especially as the library has material for all ages and areas of interest.

![Image of OneSearch page]

We can search everything (books, magazines, newspapers, websites, etc). However, unless we want to cover the whole range, the best thing may be to choose eJournals and then, on the new screen, click ‘Here’ in the following message

![Image of eJournals]

This will take us to the next screen, in which we can type our search query.
Choosing the default Basic Search gives the list below that includes more than half a million items so there is a need to filter the results in the same way as for OPAL – academic journals on education from Singapore (indicated here by a red box). The result is 46 articles, slightly fewer than for OPAL. The first one is the same as the one we found in OPAL (page 5).

However, this is a Taylor & Francis publication and the text is not available through the NLB. If you click on it, you will get information on the article but, if you want to download it, you will have to pay.

Again, the number of articles is numerous but we can again limit the number by using the filters, which, this time, appear on the left. The top items in the list of filters are highlighted in red in this screenshot.
More filters are available if you scroll down.

In the screenshot above, the user is using the ‘Advanced Search’ function instead of the ‘Basic Search’ function. Notice the extra search boxes at the top left of the page. The limiter (or filter) ‘Full Text’ has been selected and the software now lists only those journal articles for which the user is able to download the full text without payment. Thus the number of texts has dropped from nearly 46 to 33. One of those dropped is the first, *Service Learning Using English Language Teaching in Pre-Service Teacher Education in Singapore*. This is because NLB, unlike MOE, does not subscribe to the Taylor & Francis database.

In summary, OPAL and NLB work with EBSCOhost to offer the same search service. However, they have subscribed to different databases so you may find what is available on one website is not always available on the other. The best thing to do is to start with OPAL and then, if you can’t find what you want, to use NLB to search databases not supported by OPAL such as ProQuest.

**Using EndNote**

To save you doing the work, you can download citations directly to, for example, EndNote, one of the available programs that help you keep track of your literature references and that can even help you enter the citations and references correctly. At the right-hand edge of the reference, you will see a file icon with a plus sign in the middle. Click on the icon. (See the graphic below.)

You can do this for any number of references. Once you are ready, click on the ‘Folder’ icon in the red
menu bar at the top of the page. The folder should open showing all the references you have added to
the folder. Click on the ‘Export’ icon in the right-hand panel. In the new screen, ensure that the first
option ‘Direct Export in RIS Format’ is chosen and then click on ‘Save’. A message will ask for permission
to open EndNote or similar software. If you click ‘OK’, the citation will be downloaded to your EndNote
library. You can even add a copy of the article to your EndNote library and make notes on the copy,
something you shouldn’t do with the hardcopy in the actual library.
A trick from EBSCOhost

Here is a way of easily accessing EBSCOhost from your phone or tablet:

1. On your laptop (yes, your laptop), access EBSCOhost through NLB or READ@Academy and navigate to the main search page.
2. At the bottom of the search page, click on the link ‘iPhone and Android apps’.
3. You will be asked to enter your email. Give an email that you can access from your phone or tablet (i.e. not your MOE email address).
4. You will be sent an email. Open it on the device – phone or tablet, not your laptop – which you will be using to access the app. The email will include instructions on how to download the app and code for you to click to give you access for the first time.
5. Once the app is set up in this way, you can just search EBSCOhost from your device with no need to sign in!
Here are some possible views from your phone or tablet. In the list in the second screenshot, the icons next to the titles indicate whether you can download a PDF version or a text version (or both).
Another online resource: Google Scholar

Some researchers have found Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com/) to be a convenient resource in searching for research articles. One of its key features is the ability to aggregate libraries (which you may have access to), so that you can search across them. Other features include searching for articles that may be found from sources other than the libraries, and maintaining your own personal library and exporting references for easy citation. (Warning: Sometimes the citations given by Google Scholar are not accurate and you will need to check them using the relevant main database such as EBSCOhost through OPAL or NLB.)

Aggregating and searching across libraries

Here are the steps to add libraries into the search function of Google Scholar:

1. Open your Internet Browser.
3. Click ‘Settings’.
4. Click on ‘Library Links’.
5. Type in a library name, for example, ‘national institute of education’, which is good for material on Singapore, and click the search button.

6. Check the boxes next to the libraries that you would like to add to the search and click ‘Save’.

8. Do a search, for example ‘disciplinary literacy’.
9. The search results now display links to the online libraries where the article can be found. You can click on those links to access the articles from there.
Accessing articles from other sources

Some results in Google Scholar come with their own link to full text articles. This is indicated by a [PDF] or [HTML] link to the right of the search result’s title. You can try clicking on the link to access the article, as shown in the following screenshots.

![PDF link example](image1)

![HTML link example](image2)
You can also click on ‘All versions’ to look for other links to the full text articles.
To make your searches more specific, click on the ‘Advanced Scholar Search’ button on the right-hand side of the search bar, as shown below.

Maintaining your personal library and importing references

Google Scholar allows you to maintain a personal collection of articles, provided you have a Google account. You can save articles right off the search page, and organize them according to your liking. You can also get formatted citations for easy import into your document or bibliography manager.
Here are the steps to maintain your personal library and import references.

**Saving an article into your personal library**
1. Sign into your Google account.
2. After finding an article within Google Scholar, click on ‘Save’.

**Getting a formatted citation or importing references**
1. After searching for an article within Google Scholar, click on ‘More’.
2. Click on ‘Cite’.
3. Follow the on-screen instructions to save a formatted citation or import it into a bibliography manager.
Queries

If you have any difficulties with this guide or suggestions on how to improve it, please let us know at MOE ELIS Research MOE_ELIS_Research@moe.gov.sg.