Library Research Tips
Tips for searching in Worldcat and databases such as the MLA International Bibliography

- Start with a known book, book article, or journal article and use its bibliography to identify other sources that are relevant to your topic.

- Once you find a good call number for a print book, browse the stacks in McKeldin Library to find similar books.

- Type known titles of books and other resources into Worldcat to determine if they are available through the UMD Libraries. If not available, request the item on interlibrary loan using the “Request Item” in the Worldcat record.

- Brainstorm and make use of alternate key terms (EX: use discourse as well as rhetoric.)

- Use Google Books to preview books and to do keyword searching inside a book.

- Use Google Scholar to locate a known book or article and use the “cited by” and “related articles” to identify additional resources. Example:

  - Use tagged “official” subject terms to identify additional terms to use in searches.

  Worldcat example: When you find a book on your topic click on the title to get the full record, then click on Description to see additional metadata about the book (table of contents, subjects, etc.) Click on relevant subjects to locate additional books on your topic.
TOO MANY RESULTS?

- Use Worldcat **Index Labels** for more precise search results.
  - **EXAMPLE:** for a list of books about Jane Austen (where she is your subject), published by Oxford University Press try the following search: `su:jane austen AND pb:oxford university`
  - **EXAMPLE:** for a list of all books with *Sense and Sensibility* in the title and authored by Jane Austen try the following search: `au:jane austen AND ti: sense and sensibility`

- Narrow your topic by using the **AND** operator to add another concept. **EX:** *james baldwin AND reception*. Add yet another concept to narrow even further **EX:** *james baldwin AND reception AND france*. Often the **AND** operator is implied. When in doubt add it to your search.

- Limit by publication year (most recent or a range of years) and by desired format of publication (books, articles, etc.)

- In Worldcat, use the facets on the left hand side to limit your results by format (book, article, etc.) publication year, language, etc.

- In Worldcat, after you run a search and have a list of titles, use the “Sorted by” option in the upper right hand corner to resort the list by best match or recency.

- Use quotes to search for exact phrases. **EX:** “visual rhetoric” retrieves the exact phrase, whereas *visual rhetoric* retrieves anything with both words in it, but not necessarily next to each other.

NOT ENOUGH RESULTS?

- Use the wildcard symbol (*) to retrieve plurals and alternate spelling. **EX:** *rhetoric* retrieves *rhetoric, rhetorical, rhetorician*.

- Make use of the **OR** operator to include synonyms, spelling variations, etc. in your search results. **EX:** *editions OR editing OR variants OR manuscripts*. See search example below in the *MLA International Bibliography* database.
Broaden your results by **adding additional databases**. Once you are logged into an EBSCO database, such as the MLA International Bibliography, you can select to search additional databases that are part of the EBSCO platform. Click on **Choose Databases**.

Check all the databases you want to search and then click on OK. For example if you are working on a very current text by a female playwright, you might want to add **Academic Search Ultimate**, the **International Bibliography of Theatre & Dance**, and the **Women’s Studies International** to the **MLA International Bibliography** database,