Check subject guides under:  Research by Subject → English Language and Literature

Background Information

Specialized encyclopedias, dictionaries and other resources are useful for obtaining background information on a topic, in addition to helping you focus your topic and identify the main concepts, terms and keywords that describe your topic. Check Reference Resources in the course guide.

Finding Books and Journal Articles

Consider searching: QCAT (library catalogue), Article Indexes & Databases, Summon, etc.

1. Books

Search QCAT to find specific titles, authors and defined subjects. For example:

shakespeare william [search by subject] Note the sub-headings!

To find books on your topic in QCAT, think of the words that best describe your topic and then connect them with the Boolean operators:  AND, OR, NOT.

My topic is to explore Shakespeare’s treatment of female characters in his tragedies, in particular, Hamlet. The concepts are: Shakespeare, treatment, female, characters, tragedies

shakespeare AND female AND characters AND tragedies

In this case, one needs to think of alternative words that describe this topic. If you do find relevant titles, look at the subject headings assigned (LCSH) which can lead to more accurate results.

shakespeare AND (female OR    ) AND (tragedies OR    )

2. Articles

Use the following electronic journal database to find scholarly articles:

→ MLA International Bibliography
→ Literature Online (LION)

To search indexes, click the tab Databases and enter the title of the database, e.g. MLA.

william shakespeare AND macbeth

To find out if Queen’s subscribes to the journal, click Get It! @ Queen’s if full text not readily available.
Search **LION** to find information about authors and criticism and more!

Search as Author: shakespeare william
Search as Criticism: shakespeare and revenge and hamlet

### 3. Summon

With Summon, you can search, discover and access information on any topic from the Queen’s Library collections - print and electronic books, single articles to entire e-journals, newspapers, theses and more. You can limit your results to peer-reviewed materials, filter by year and format, narrow by additional subject terms and then save, print or email references.

Summon is a good starting point to find material for your research but if you are doing higher level research, you will want to search relevant subject specific databases.

### Search the Web

Check our Search the Web guide: [library.queensu.ca/research/guide/search-web](library.queensu.ca/research/guide/search-web)

**Google**  
[Google Advanced Search](www.google.ca/advanced_search)  
[Google Scholar](scholar.google.ca)

By searching **Google Scholar** through the Queen’s Library website, the "Get It! @ Queen’s" citation linker is activated (which allows you to click through to the Library’s subscriptions).

### Evaluate Sources

Evaluating all of your sources is a crucial step of the research process. Go to the library guide on **Evaluating Sources** for criteria on how to judge information sources (especially for websites).

### Cite Sources

Check our **Citation and Style Guides** page at:  
[How-to & Help → How to Cite Sources](library.queensu.ca/research/guide/cite)

**MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers**  
*Seventh Edition*

MLA is the preferred style of documentation in English literature. Check QCAT for print copies in the library system or use the online MLA style guide at OWL at Purdue University.

Elizabeth Gibson  
Stauffer Library  
Fall 2015