

## Guide to Using FirstSearch Basic and Advanced Databases

**What is FirstSearch?** *FirstSearch Basic* is a collection of five general, interdisciplinary databases, courtesy of MAGNOLIA, the statewide resource-sharing project. *FirstSearch Advanced* is a collection of 13 general and subject-specific databases paid for by Delta State University. Although FirstSearch is separated by subscription type, it has one search interface and provides citations to journals, magazines, books, and various types of media.

**How to Access FirstSearch?** FirstSearch Basic and Advanced databases are available on and off campus. To access FirstSearch, go to the “Articles by Subject” web page at <http://www.deltastate.edu/pages/676.asp> and select either FirstSearch Basic or FirstSearch Advanced from the “Quick Jump to a Database” drop down menu. You may also access databases within FirstSearch by selecting the database’s name from the drop down menu. For off-campus instructions, please consult the “Guide to Accessing Databases Off-Campus” available from the library or online at <http://www.deltastate.edu/pages/2237.asp>.

**How to Choose a Database?** The first step to using FirstSearch is to choose a database to search. You may search the databases individually or up to three at a time by checking the box(es) in front of the database’s name and clicking on *Select* (see Figures 1 & 2). If you are unsure about which databases to search, you may want to list the databases by topic (Figure 3) or allow FirstSearch to suggest the best database (Figure 4).



Figure 1 – List of FirstSearch Basic databases

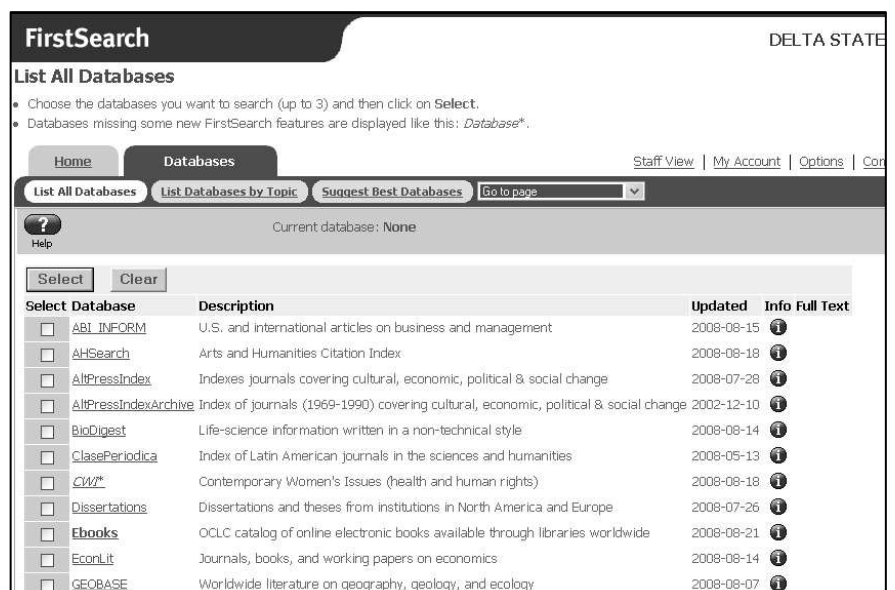
Choose the databases you wish to search and click on Select.

For more information about the databases, click on the info icon.

Figure 2 – List of FirstSearch Advanced databases

Choose the databases you wish to search and click on Select.

For more information about the databases, click on the info icon.



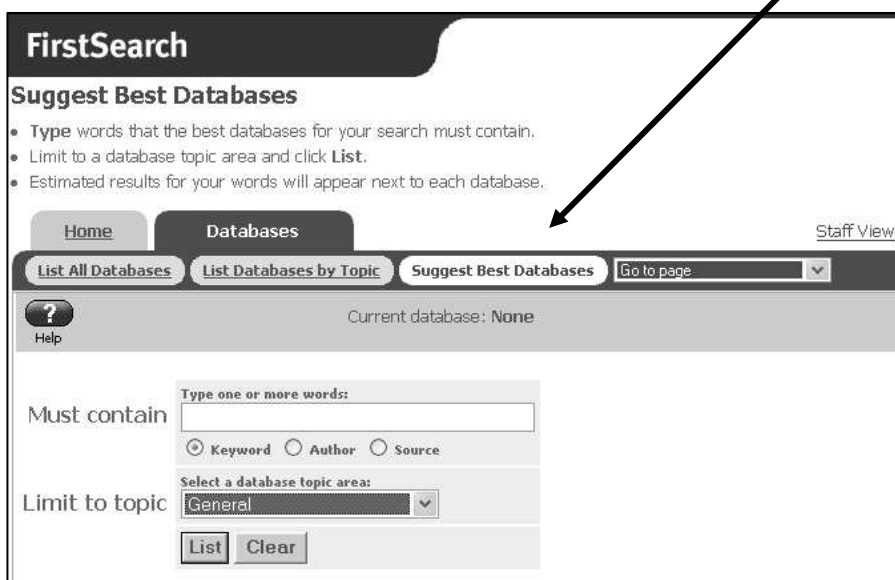


**Figure 3 – Databases by Topic**

To view databases by subject, click on the link “List Databases by Topic” at the top of the screen.

The topical areas range from general to subject-specific. The list of databases will change as you select a topic area. Click on the drop-down menu to list the subject areas.

Once you have chosen a database or databases to search, click on **Select**.



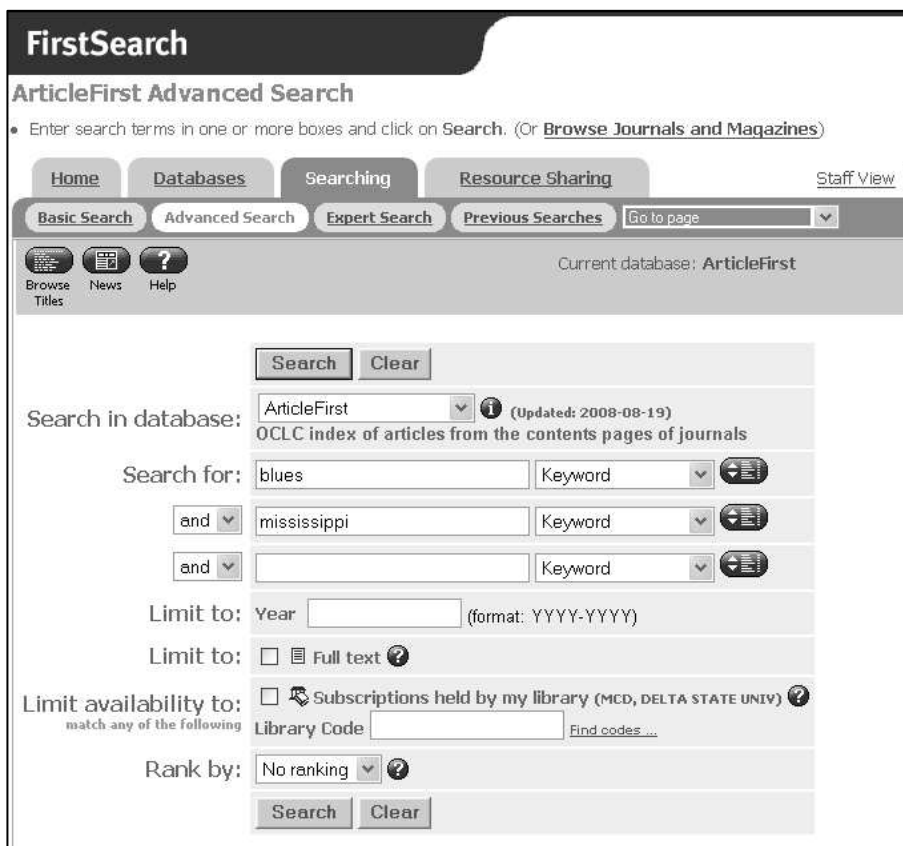
**Figure 4 – Suggest Best Databases**

To utilize this feature, type a word or phrase related to your topic in the **Must Contain** search box. Then select a topic area and click on **List**.

The system will display an estimated number of results for each database appropriate for that topic. Choose the desired number of databases and proceed by clicking on **Select**.

For example, the search in Figure 3 will look for the words *blues* and *Mississippi* in the General databases and display a number of results for each database.

**How to Begin Searching?** FirstSearch offers three types of searches: *Basic*, *Advanced*, and *Expert*. The Basic Search screen allows you to search by keyword, author, title, and other search options. The Advanced and Expert Search screens allow you to perform complex searches with features such as Boolean operators and field codes. The system automatically displays the Advanced Search screen when you begin to use FirstSearch databases (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5 – Advanced Search Screen**

The *Advanced Search* gives you more control of your results because you can search multiple fields and set limiters.

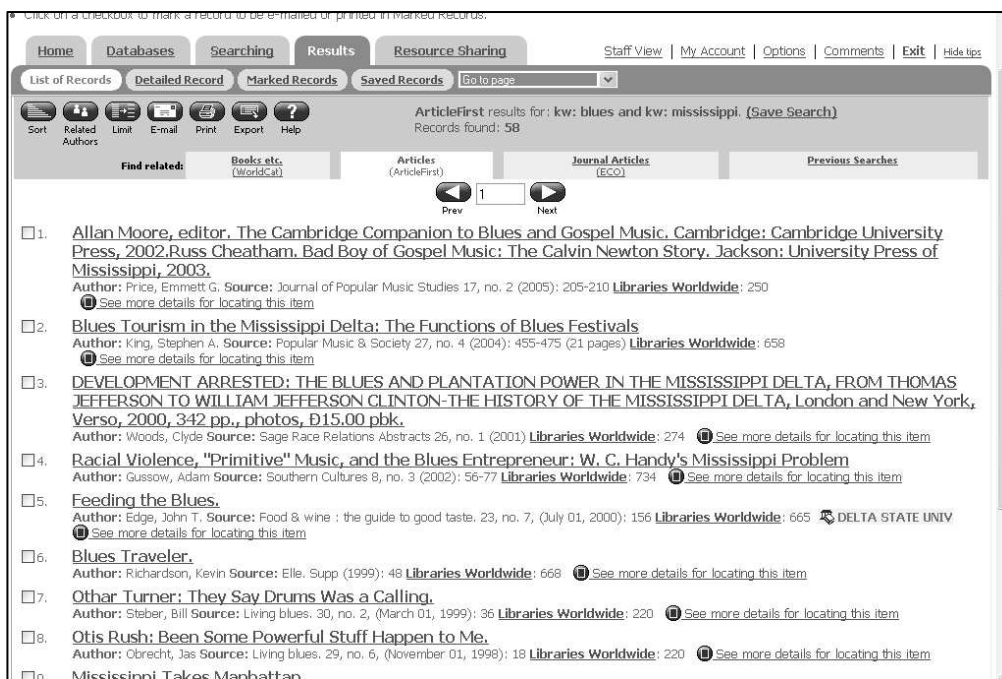
The searchable fields vary from database to database so look at the drop down menu to determine the appropriate field such as author, title, subject, source, etc.

Limiters can be used to designate publication year, full text, or availability (items owned by DSU).

*Although full text is an option, there is virtually no full-text content in FirstSearch.*


The sample search in Figure 4 will retrieve articles with the words *blues* and *Mississippi* in the citation (i.e. title, author, source, or subject field) limited to items available in Roberts-LaForge Library. See page 4 for “**Searching Tips**”.

**How to Interpret Results?** The results will differ according to the database searched. Most results will be citations for journals, magazines, books, or videos (see Figure 6).




**Figure 6 – List of Records**

Results are shown in abbreviated format. Click on the title, underlined and in blue, to view the full citation, including an abstract if available.

 indicates that DSU owns the item or source. If owned, you would physically retrieve the item from Roberts-LaForge Library.

If DSU does not own the item, you could request it through interlibrary loan.

## Searching Tips

- Too Many Results?
  - Add more search terms and combine the terms with the Boolean operator **and**.
  - Search within a specific field (e.g. title, author, subject, etc.).
  - Enclose a phrase in quotation marks, ex. “No Child Left Behind”
  - Use limiters such as publication year or item type.
- Not Enough Results or No Results?
  - Use synonyms or variant terms.
  - Browse the indexes to check the spelling or format of your search terms and phrases. To access the Browse indexes feature, click on the  Browse Index icon located beside the search boxes.
  - Use the **Suggest Best Databases** feature of FirstSearch (See Figure 3 on page 2).

**How to Navigate FirstSearch?** Use the tabs at the top of screen to navigate FirstSearch (see Figure 7). The tabs will change as you conduct searches and maneuver through the databases.



**Figure 7 – FirstSearch Tabs**

The **databases** tab will show you a list of FirstSearch databases.

The **searching** tab will take you back to the search screen so you can refine a search or start a new one.

**How to Print, Email, Save, or Export Records?** FirstSearch offers printer friendly versions of records for your convenience. You may print, email, save, or export records individually or as a group in brief or detailed format.

### *Printing and Emailing Records*

- After you have marked records to print or email, click on **Marked Records** (as shown in Figure 7). Once you see the list of records you selected, you have the option to change the display to brief or detailed. Next, click on the print or email icon.

### *Saving Records*

- After you have marked records to save, click on  **Export** (as shown in Figure 7). Then select marked records beside *Export* and *Export To: Text file* (see figure 7). When prompted by File Download, choose save to a disk and click on ok. Save in the appropriate drive and give the file a name. The file will be saved as a text document.

### *Exporting Records*

- You can export records to EndNote or RefWorks documentation software. Follow the same directions for saving records, but select the appropriate software and click on **Export**.

**Have a Question? Ask a Librarian.**

07/29/09 AMA