Finding a Scholarly Article in Academic Search Complete

I'm going to show you everything there is to know about finding a scholarly article. NO! That would take too long. I'm going to show you a couple of things about finding a scholarly article, and I'll use a library database called Academic Search Complete to do it. Oh, and because database interfaces tend to be similar, you can use what you learn here to find an article in most of our other databases.

There is a bit of a learning curve. Don't worry, though-- learning how to flip around a balisong this isn't. For starters, if it overwhelms you, ignore all the features available in this Advanced Search screen-- the search box at the top is all you really need. Now, say I want to learn about Daylight Saving Time. I’ll punch my keywords into the box, click search. Whoa. I get 386 results.

That's a lot, but we're not done. Databases contain different kinds of documents, and so does my current search, so I have the option to limit my results to peer-reviewed articles only on the left-hand side. So I'm going to do that, and POW! I get fewer results. Peer-reviewed articles are a big deal because they were evaluated by experts before they were published. Wait-- didn't I just say I was looking for scholarly articles? Yes. So, what's this peer-review stuff all of a sudden? They are kind of the same thing. Depending who you're talking to, or what database you're using, the terms "scholarly, peer-reviewed, refereed, or academic" can all refer to this same kind of high quality article.

Let's walk through an entry of one of our results. The title is at the top of each entry and usually prominent. Below that, the smaller black text tells us who wrote it, the journal it comes from, and then the particulars of date, volume, issue, and so forth. But the bottom of the entry is where the money is at: that’s where they keep the links to the actual article. If the entire article is there, it will say “full text,” which also comes in different flavors, like linked full text, HTML full text, and PDF full text. Don't sweat it, though--they all have the same information. When in doubt, just click on any of those until you find your article. But if you do have a choice, I recommend PDF full text. PDFs are formatted like print documents, so they have page numbers and print nicely, and I also just think they're pretty. Ahem.

But what if there aren't any full text links, like this? That’s because the database knows this article exists, but doesn't have a copy available. This happens often enough that we have a special link for it: the "find it" button. Click there, and you'll get a page that might have links to other databases that might have a copy, to the catalog so you can search for a print copy here in the library, or to Interlibrary Loan so you can request a copy from somewhere else.

So that’s a quick overview of finding a scholarly article in Academic Search Complete. And I only scratched the surface of the nifty things this database can do for you. To learn more, take some time to play with it or ask a librarian.