Library Research Sources and Strategy

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Library Research Guide to Economics Website:
http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/alacarte/subject-guide/46-Economics
Getting Started

- Read, think, and talk with your instructors
- If you are unsure where to start consult general books or encyclopedias
- See library economics site for sample background sources
  - New Palgrave Encyclopedia of Economics
    http://www.dictionaryofeconomics.com/dictionary
- Read economics blogs, newspapers, and op-eds
Finding Books

• Search Oskicat, the Berkeley library catalog  
  http://oskicat.berkeley.edu/

• Search Melvyl (the UC Wide catalog) for resources outside the UCB libraries  
  http://berkeley.worldcat.org/

• Google Scholar works for books and articles. Use the library proxy off campus  
  http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/Help/proxy.html

• Off campus configure the Google scholar preferences under “library links” to “University of California Berkeley”  
  http://scholar.google.com/scholar_preferences
Oskicat Searching

• Use simple search terms, e.g. “economic development china”

• If you get too many results refine, limit and revise

• Limit results by language (click “modify search”, pull down and select the language)

• Results can be sorted by date or relevance

• Persistence is key to successful research
Journal Articles

• Journals are the main vehicle for scholarly communication in most areas of economics

• If you find good articles check the references – authors cite other important works

• Use Econlit and IDEAS at a minimum. For other sources see the library econ web site

• Consult the top-ranked economics journals

Tips for finding articles

• Use truncation to find variant word endings
  – E.g. “financ*” retrieves finance, financial, financing etc.

• Google uses an automatic Boolean AND between terms. Some databases do not
  – E.g. the search “Mexico financial” may search these two words adjacently like a phrase. When in doubt connect terms with “and”

• Try synonyms if you get too few results

• Most databases do not correct spelling mistakes

• Academic writers use technical terms (jargon). If you discover new terms that match your topic use them
Finding Data

• See econ library web site statistics and data section
  http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/alacarte/subject
guide/46-Economics

• Take advantage of the library data lab
  http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/wikis/datalab/
Data Tips and Definitions

• The library has lots of aggregate data and government data via subscription

• More and more data is free

• Aggregate data does not usually require statistical software to view and analyze

• Examples
  – China Data Online
  – IMF International Financial Statistics
Microdata

- Original survey data (microdata) cannot be read without statistical software, e.g. Stata, R, SDA
  - e.g. PUMS (Public Use Microdata)
- The library has statistical software installed on our data lab machines
- You can purchase Stata on campus
- Statistical software can take time to learn
Data Tips

• Give extra time to find and analyze microdata

• The Library Data lab has introductory guides. Staff can provide introductions and limited hands-on

• Read documentation (if any) carefully before sub-setting variables

• For help email Jim Church (jchurch@library.berkeley) or Harrison Dekker (hdekker@library.berkeley)