How to Select Appropriate Resources
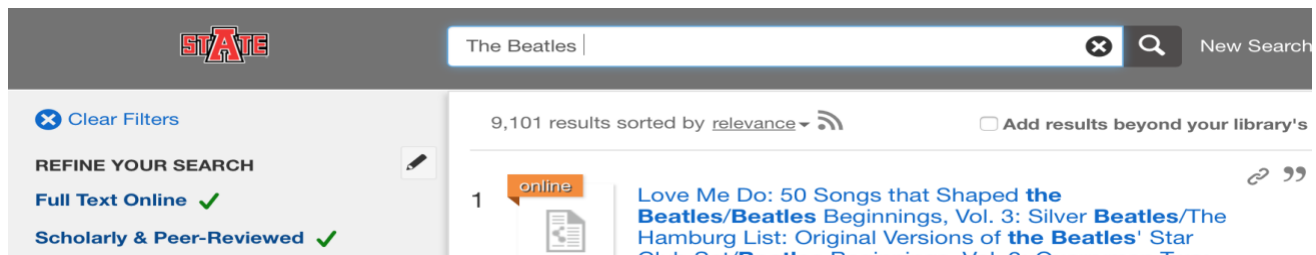## A-State Online Writing Center

Are you writing a difficult research paper and struggling to find quality sources? Have you stumbled upon too much information about the subject you want to talk about? All of these problems can be solved by learning how to choose your sources when working on a project. Like most things, quality is better than quantity when it comes to selecting resources. Let's discuss how to easily comb through the "coal" within databases to find our "diamonds."

- **Find a Topic and Narrow it Down:** After a careful prompt reading, it is time to decide what topic will be the best fit. Choose something that sparks your interest (it will make it easier to research and write about later on). Once you have decided what that is, work on narrowing it down to something specific within your field that you can build on. The best topic you can find is 1.) isn't so broad that you get too many search results 2.) isn't narrowed down to the point of having little to no results.
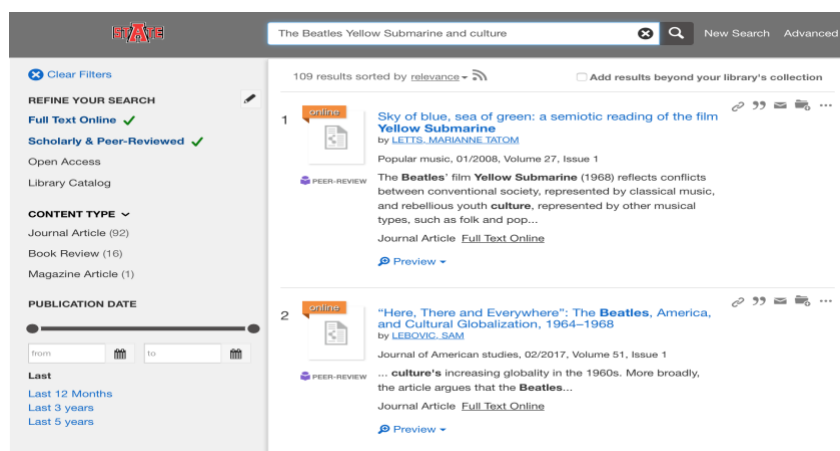
(Example of a subject that is too broad. It yields 9,101 search results).

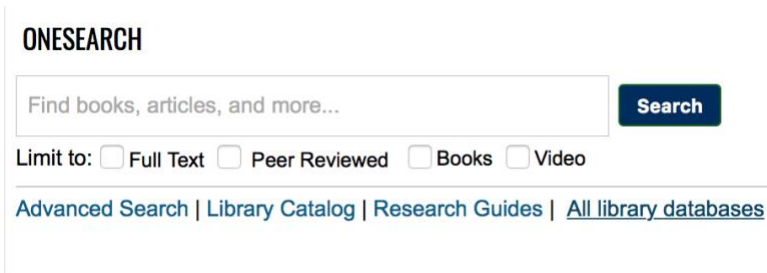(Example of a subject that is too broad. It yields 9,101 search results).

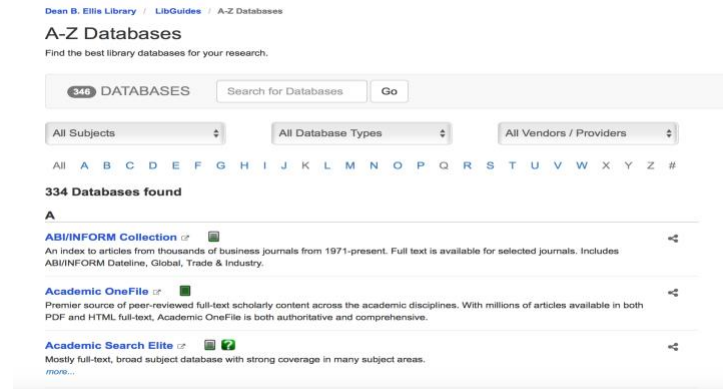(Example of a narrowed-down topic that yields only 109 results).

- **Decide on a Database or Multiple Databases:** Next, you will have to decide which databases to use in your scope. When choosing databases, it is important to find one that corresponds with the discipline you are writing for (i.e., Nursing research found in a nursing database or Psychology research found in that corresponding database). Our library even has a spot for choosing databases.

(Click on "All Library Databases" on our Dean B. Ellis Library site. It'll pop up with this next image that shows we have 334 databases to choose from).

- **Choosing Qualitative Sources Over Quantitative Sources:** After deciding a topic, narrowing it down, and choosing a database, it is time to choose which sources will benefit you the most. In order to do this, you must figure out what information the resource is providing, how the author is producing and supplementing that argument, how that information works for or against your own argument, and if this information is coming from a reputable source. We can do this by utilizing the abstract. Below you will find the abstract from the first article in my "narrowed" search.

The top of the article shows you the needed information for your citation, and the abstract tells you the contents of the text before you dive into it.

- **Gather Sources:** Some professors list the number of sources required for their assignments, and others describe the type of source required (i.e, book, reputable journal from a specific discipline, a newspaper article, an interview, etc.). Some instructors won't have a requirement for the amount or type of source you choose. These will be listed in your prompt if required. Once you have this information, your keywords (from your narrowed-down topic), your database and access to abstracts, you can choose your handful of quality sources. Each should be carefully handpicked to best fit your topic and argument.

Helpful Tip: Use filters when working to sort this information. Use full-text and peer-reviewed articles for the best results and the easiest article access. You can also specify the content type, year of publication, and include more subject terms other than your original keywords (these subject terms help further link your research to your discipline).