Title
Searching for Recent Anthropology and Archaeology Publications

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/94c8t9sk

Journal
ANSS Currents, 33(1)

Authors
Emmelhainz, Celia
Estrada, Natalia

Publication Date
2018


SEARCHING FOR RECENT ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY PUBLICATIONS

Celia Emmelhainz
Anthropology Librarian, UC Berkeley
emmelhainz@berkeley.edu

Natalia Estrada
Reference and Collections Assistant, Social Sciences Division, UC Berkeley
nestrada@library.berkeley.edu

Here at Berkeley’s George and Mary Foster Anthropology Library, we support researchers who are searching the literature for their coursework or in support of field observations. Yet we regularly find that one of our most basic roles—that of mentor for students in finding anthropological literature—has been one of the most challenging.

As many librarians do, we have anthropology students start searching for articles in Anthropology Plus, an EBSCO database which can be searched alongside the general Academic Search Premier. We note that AnthroSource hosts articles from 32 journals published by the American Anthropological Association. Depending on students’ focus, we may mention broader medical or humanities databases such as PubMed, JSTOR, or Web of Science. We have them find books in our catalog and borrow through interlibrary loan. And we also mention Google Scholar for searching and citation chaining, while cautioning about the broad indexing that leads to less relevant and lower quality results.

Yet in classes and individual consultations, we still watch students struggle to find even a handful of highly relevant sources. This is true even when we know that there’s a body of literature out there (say, on bride abduction in Central Asia) and when we know of key researchers (Cynthia Werner, Noor Borbieva) on that topic.

So if we’re not seeing these articles in the databases, how can anthropology students themselves find books and articles written by researchers in their fields? Other than pointing them to our long campus list of databases and suggesting they try the ones flagged as anthropology, what can we do? In this article, we’ll talk about what we learned when searching key databases for articles by our own faculty members and how that changed our advice for students in the field.
Background and Methods
The George and Mary Foster Anthropology Library is one of 25 libraries at the University of California, Berkeley. Founded in the 1950s, it has a collection of 80,000 volumes, about half of which are in nearby off-site storage. The library supports a department of 27 anthropology and archaeology faculty members, 100 grad students, 100 majors, and many more undergraduates taking an elective or core course.

This year, a team of librarians in the social sciences at UC Berkeley have been studying the references in faculty publications to better understand what foreign languages are being used in research, and whether we’re effectively supporting faculty research with our current purchases. For this project, we compiled a list of publications by Berkeley anthropology faculty, published between 2013 and 2017. Because finding anthropology research can be so difficult, we noted which databases indexed each publication on our list. We hoped that by learning where a faculty member’s publications could be found, we’d get a better sense of where students were likely to find relevant publications--and where a search for those same articles would be fruitless.

Figure 1: Spreadsheet of publications by faculty member’s subfield, type, and where found.
To compile this list, we searched each faculty member’s name in indexes such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, JSTOR, Anthropology Plus, AnthroSource, and Academic Search Complete, and noted which publications appeared and whether the database classified it as an article, book, chapter, or review. (We limited the search to 2013-2017 to capture recent articles, and at times, we used location or topic to find researchers with common names.) We then clustered the results by the researcher’s self-described focus of archaeology, cultural anthropology (including one linguist), or medical anthropology (including one biological anthropologist), to better understand how research is indexed by subfield. Below, we report our results and the implications for assisting students in their searches.

**Results from Our Project**

![Anthropology Faculty Publication Accessibility Count By Subfield](image)

Figure 2: Indexing rates of publications by databases.

Even in this limited set of anthropologists, we found that coverage of publications varied by subdiscipline. The discipline-specific Anthropology Plus indexed 25% of our archaeologists’ publications, 23% of cultural anthropologists’ publications, and 16% of medical anthropology publications, while AnthroSource indexed only 1%, 7%, and 11%, respectively.

At the suggestion of anthropology librarian Wade Kotter, we also considered Anthropological Index Online, a free index available if your university can’t afford subject specific databases. We found that AIO indexed our cultural and medical anthropologists nearly as well as the paid Anthropology Plus, but was less effective for our archaeological publications; it also has the weakness of not including searchable abstracts or links to full text.

Although we appreciated the quality and focus of results in disciplinary databases, we found a greater proportion of our publications in Google Scholar and Web of Science. Perhaps because archaeology depends heavily on book chapters (see below), we were three times as likely to find our archaeologists’ publications in Google Scholar as in Anthropology Plus.
We also considered where each type of research output could be found. While *Anthropology Plus* was the best disciplinary database, finding 43% of articles and 33% of book reviews (*AnthroSource* had only 4% of articles and 25% of reviews), we were surprised to realize it did not index books or chapters. This is a critical gap in coverage, given what archaeologists have told us about the importance of chapters in their discipline. Even our library catalog often lacks searchable chapter titles and authors, meaning that students using a typical search strategy of anthropological databases plus book catalog may not realize what they’re missing. *Google Scholar* had the best coverage of chapters, but they’re hidden among dross and you can’t facet a search by publication type. *Scopus* was a distant second.

**Reflections**

This project has already changed our advice to students and faculty in anthropology. We direct fewer researchers to *AnthroSource*, as its high quality but limited coverage of articles and reviews makes it less useful as a starting search. Even *Anthropology Plus* missed all chapters and many substantial articles by our researchers. We found that core anthropology and archaeology publications often turned up in medical, food studies, geographic, sociology, history, or neuroscience journals or books, meaning that students need to use general databases along with other specialty indexes to find anthropological works.

Although we knew book chapters were important, we hadn’t realized the impact of their absence in most indexes. While skeptical of *Google Scholar*’s attempts to widely index gray literature, which dilutes search results, we found more chapters there than anywhere else. (In one case, it tagged an epigraph attributed to our professor as the chapter’s author, though, indicating how page-specific the algorithm for finding chapter authors must be!) *Scopus* was more easily searchable, but given *Google Scholar*’s wider coverage, we’ll recommend it for students needing chapters in addition to the standard “five peer-reviewed articles” for an academic paper.

Although we’d recommended them, we had an intuitive sense that *JSTOR* and *PubMed* weren’t as fruitful even for searches in medical anthropology, and we indeed saw few enough results that we dropped them from our graphs above. Finding that *Scopus*, *Web of Science*, and the *International Bibliography of Social Sciences* performed relatively well, we are now more likely to recommend them to anthropology researchers.

This project did have its limitations. First, our department has a strong focus on cultural anthropology, archaeology, and medical anthropology, meaning that these results may not apply as well to primatology, folkloristics, or linguistic...
anthropology. Second, the sample size was small. And third, searching by author is useful (if the author’s publications aren’t in the database, a subject search won’t pull that article) but is an imprecise estimate of whether students can find these same articles with a subject search.

Still, having a better sense of the value of our indexes has shifted which databases we recommend to students in classes, consultations, and LibGuides. We now recommend a broader set of databases, as well as alternate sources when researchers need to find chapters in edited volumes. We have also come to believe that we need to push subscription databases to better index subfields outside of cultural anthropology, and book chapters in particular.

Finally, this also gives us something to take back to our faculty, who believe their reputation precedes them. While Berkeley anthropologists are prolific and well-known, their works remain hidden even in a systematic search. Without open access articles, institutional repositories, better indexes, and academic networking sites such as ResearchGate or Academia.edu, there’s no guarantee their work will be found. Even the brightest insights will be inaccessible unless we ensure that anthropological and archaeological research is well-indexed, sustainably preserved, and easily searchable on the Internet.

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank project lead Susan Edwards and colleagues Adam Clemmons, Chan Li, and Liladhar Pendse for including us in their faculty citations project, and Josh Quan for help in extracting Scopus data. We appreciate Wade Kotter’s recommendation that we also look at Anthropological Index Online. We would also like to thank the developers of Publish or Perish 6, a free software program that let us download lists of publications by author from Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Scopus.

ACRL Books

ACRL publishes a range of books to assist academic librarians in developing their professional careers, managing their institutions, and increasing their awareness of developments in librarianship, providing timely, thought-provoking, and practical content and research to academic and research librarians worldwide. Some recent titles:

- *Applying Library Values to Emerging Technology: Decision-Making in the Age of Open Access, Maker Spaces, and the Ever-Changing Library* [linked to: https://www.alastore.ala.org/content/applying-library-values-emerging-technology-decision-making-age-open-access-maker-spaces-and]

- *Framing Information Literacy: Teaching Grounded in Theory, Pedagogy, and Practice* (Publications in Librarianship #73), 6-Volume Set [let’s link to the set in the Store here, and each individual volume below; if the links aren’t live yet, let’s use a “Coming soon!” burst]
  - Volume 1: Research as Inquiry
  - Volume 2: Information has Value
  - Volume 3: Searching as Strategic Exploration
  - Volume 4: Information Creation as a Process
  - Volume 5: Scholarship as Conversation
  - Volume 6: Authority is Constructed and Contextual

Interested in writing for ACRL? Contact Erin Nevius, ACRL’s Content Strategist, at enevius@ala.org for more information, or visit www.ala.org/acrl/publications/publishing to learn more about our book publishing program and submit a proposal.