

## INTEGRATING PERIODICAL DATABASES INTO THE MARKETING CURRICULUM

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### ABSTRACT

Over the last three decades, educational institutions – and business schools in particular – have aggressively embraced technology, both within the classroom setting and for student use in outside projects and activities. In the business school setting, technology has spanned a number of areas and applications. Over time, this use has expanded from its early emphasis primarily on word processing and spreadsheets to today's more comprehensive assortment that includes applications such as market simulations, Internet applications, presentation management, and digital video editing.

Ironically, one of the greatest and most useful resources offered within the university – and available at little or no cost – remains greatly underused. Students today have access to a vast array of periodical databases which allow students to pinpoint very specific search interests, allowing the researcher to maximize the return of relevant articles while minimizing irrelevant "false hits."

Students today have become greatly accustomed to the use of ordinary search engines that help identify relevant material from the Internet. Many students, however, fail to show any understanding of the limitations of such sites and the tremendous variability in the quality of, and motivations behind, various commercial web sites. Unfortunately, the fault is not entirely with students since many faculty members also fail to appreciate what is available in online sources. Gaining expertise with professional library databases is likely to be a considerable help in students' future careers. Although universities usually have essentially unlimited access to these databases for a fixed yearly fee, firms and private individuals who seek access to these databases at commercial rates will find this access very expensive. Therefore, employers are likely to appreciate students who have learned to perform quick searches that maximize the yield of relevant articles.

### SELECTED DATABASES

ABI/Inform is a database that emphasizes business and trade publications. This database is hosted

among a number of other databases that all use the ProQuest format and interface.

ProQuest allows you to use "Boolean" logic and other tools to expand or narrow your search. Notice the two boxes that, by default, specify "AND." You can specify the following options:

**AND →** Both conditions must be true – e.g., "advertising" AND "marketing" would call for articles that deal both with Microsoft and marketing.

**OR →** At least one of the terms must apply – e.g., "advertising" OR "promotion" would result in articles that use at least one of the two terms.

**AND NOT →** The first term must apply but the second must NOT apply. For example, "price response" AND NOT "finance" would result in articles covering price response but not if the article relates to finance.

**WITHIN3** The second term must appear no more than three words before or After the first term. For example, for "Internet" WITHIN3 "banking" would identify the phrase "Internet Credit and Banking," ignoring the "Credit and" string.

By default, ABI/Inform will identify only those articles that feature the selected search terms in the citation (e.g., author, title, periodical, and date) and abstract (brief summary if available or sometimes the first few paragraphs of an article). This helps reduce the number of irrelevant articles where a term may appear only in passing. In some cases – such as a firm that wants to find information a small company that is a competitor – you may want to specify "citation and document text" to allow for the terms to appear anywhere in the article. It is also possible to search for article authors. This may be useful if a particular writer covers an industry of interest.



Further options allow one to search by the following variables:

- Location (country or region)
- Product name (but not company name)
- NAICS code (see below)
- Person name (e.g., the name of a company CEO)

Sometimes, we may be able to predict which terms a librarian or author will use to classify an article. At other times, however, we may miss out on some related terms we did not think of. Suppose we want to find articles about low carbohydrate ice cream and run the search "ice cream" AND "carbohydrate." [We specify only "carbohydrate" since the author may use terms such as "reduced" or "minimal" rather than "low."] This will result in several articles. We can now examine the index terms used in those articles and run additional searches on those terms that we did not already use and seem promising.

Lexis-Nexis is a general database that tends to emphasize newspaper and magazine articles more than trade publications. This is the most commonly available database and the one to which you will be most likely to have access in industry. The default search screen provides only limited search options. Therefore, the following process is recommended:

1. In the middle of the screen, near the top, choose "Guided Search."
2. Choose a news-source such as "General news." [A separate "Business" section also exists, but you will likely get a larger number of relevant articles under "General News."]
3. Select a specific source such as "Major Papers" or "Magazines and Journals."
4. Select terms and where these terms should appear. You will get more "hits" if you select "Full text" – so that the word(s) will need to appear just once anywhere in the article – but you will likely get more relevant articles if you choose the default of "Headline, Lead Paragraph(s), Terms."
5. In the middle of the screen, near the top, choose "Guided Search."
6. Choose a news-source such as "General news." [A separate "Business" section also exists, but you will likely get a larger number of relevant articles under "General News."]
7. Select a specific source such as "Major Papers" or "Magazines and Journals."
8. Select terms and where these terms should appear. You will get more "hits" if you select "Full text" – so that the word(s) will need to appear just once anywhere in the article – but you will likely get more relevant articles if you

choose the default of "Headline, Lead Paragraph(s), Terms."

Sometimes, you may want to search using only the root of a word when articles that use various words based on that root may be of interest – e.g., "color" and "colorful." Further, the use of the beginning of a word may be appropriate when the word's spelling differs between American and British English (e.g., "color" in American English and "colour" in British). To search on only a portion of the term, we use "truncation" symbol – an exclamation point – to indicate that any word starting this way is relevant. Thus, we would use the term

colo!

to find articles containing words starting with "colo" – e.g., "color," "colour," or "colorful." Unfortunately, articles about Colorado may also come up, so there is a tradeoff between flexibility and additional "false hits."

Other parts of the Lexis-Nexis Academic database offers other features – e.g.,

- "World News," which includes English language articles from foreign countries
- "Non-English language news," where, if you speak a Spanish, French, German, Dutch, or Italian, you can search publications in that language – but you must search in the respective language.

By default, Lexis-Nexis Academic will only bring up articles from the last six months. You can specify how far you would like to go back. Articles more than three years old are usually not current. Those dealing with rapidly advancing industries such as computers and biotech or with rapidly developing countries such as China may become obsolete in a year or less.

A handout with more elaborate information is available at <http://www.buad307.com>.