

16.3.3: Accessing an Article

To find the article, you first have to determine if your library has the particular periodical. This is a key step because **just because an item is listed in an index you have available to you in your library doesn't mean that your library subscribes to that particular periodical**. If you know it is an article that is critical to your research and it is in a periodical your library doesn't carry, you might want to discuss your options with a librarian. You still might be able to get access to the article, but you will probably have to wait several days or even weeks to get it, and your library might charge you a fee.

The process of how to find out if your library subscribes to a particular periodical varies from library to library. At many libraries, you can learn whether or not a particular periodical is available by doing a "title" search of the library's main electronic catalog. At other libraries, you have to conduct a search with a different electronic database.

You will also want to figure out whether or not the article you are looking for appears in a more current issue of the periodical. Most libraries keep the current magazines, journals, and newspapers in a reading room of some sort that is separate from where they keep older issues of periodicals. What counts as "current" depends on the periodical and your particular library's practices. For daily newspapers, libraries might only make a few weeks of the current editions available, while they might consider all of a year's worth of a journal that is only published three or four times a year as current.

If your library does carry the particular periodical publication where the article appears, your next step is to figure out *how* the library carries the item. Unlike books, libraries store periodical materials in several different ways. Ask your librarian how you can find out how your library stores particular periodicals, though this information is usually provided to you when you find out if your library carries the periodical in the first place.

Bound periodicals. Most libraries have shelves where they keep bound periodicals, which are groups of individual issues of a periodical that are bound together into book form. Individual issues of a magazine or journal (usually a year's worth) are made into one large book with the title of the periodical and the volume or year of editions of the periodical printed in bold letters on the spine of the book.

Microfilm/microfiche. Libraries also store periodicals by converting them to either microfilm or microfiche because it takes much less room to store these materials. Newspapers are almost always stored in one of these two formats or online. Microfilms are rolls of film where a black-and-white duplicate of the periodical publication appears, page for page as it appeared in the original. Microfiche are small sheets of film with black-and-white duplications of the original. To read these materials, library patrons must use special machinery that projects the images of the periodical pages onto a screen. Check with a librarian in your library about how to read and make copies of articles that are stored on microfilm or microfiche.

Electronic periodicals. Most college and university libraries also make periodicals available electronically through a particular database. These articles are often available as just text, which means any illustrations, charts, or photographs that might have accompanied the article as it was originally published won't be included. However, some online databases are beginning to provide articles in a format called "Portable Document File" (PDF), which electronically reproduces the article as it originally appeared in the periodical.

Periodicals from Electronic Databases

The example of an entry from a periodical database, "International concern for the sustainability of the world's fisheries," is an example of one where the full text of the article is available online through the library's database. This example also demonstrates how the differences between "the library" and "the Internet" can be confusing. Periodical articles available online, but originally published in a more traditional journal, magazine, or newspaper, are considered "library" and not "Internet" evidence.

For example, I was able to read the article, which appeared in *The Colorado Journal of International Environmental Law & Policy*, even though my library doesn't subscribe to the paper version of this journal, because I was able to read it electronically with the WilsonSelect database. But even though I was only able to read an electronic version of this article delivered to me via a library database accessed through the World Wide Web, I still consider this article as a "periodical" or "library" source.

Hyperlink: For guidelines for properly citing research materials you find as "complete text" in online databases, see "Citing Your Researching Using MLA or APA Style."

This page titled [16.3.3: Accessing an Article](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Steven D. Krause](#).

- [3.3: Accessing an Article](#) by [Steven D. Krause](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).