How Do I Do a Literature Search?
There are two main approaches to doing literature searches: searching using a search term and searching citations, both of which rely on the availability of online databases. Examples of databases include:

- Firstsearch
- Web of Science
- Science Direct
- Google Scholar

You usually get to these via your institution’s library. However, Google Scholar is a publically available database. These databases have different strengths and attributes, but all have good help facilities which will guide you through using them.

Search terms can be:

- **An author name**: You know somebody who has written on the topic of interest to you and you want to know what they have said.
- **A keyword or phrase which relates to your topic**: Keywords can generally be found in either:
  - The topic of the published work. Usually this means the word or phrase will appear in the abstract of a journal article.
  - The title of the piece. Tying keywords to titles will produce fewer “hits” but if the keyword is in the title, then you can be pretty sure that the piece will be relevant for you.

Typically, you can refine your search in various ways to reduce the number of hits to manageable proportions. You can do this by specifying a range of years for publication and/or the general area of work in which you are interested by discipline or field.

Here you start by locating a published piece of work in a database and then the search engine will locate all the subsequent published works in the database which have cited the original piece. This allows you to find related work which may be useful for you.

**Search for resources about doing a literature search**