

“ASK THE LIBRARIAN” about ... STAYING CURRENT WITH RESEARCH

Pātai: (Question)

While I am studying post graduate papers and writing my thesis how can I be sure I am keeping up with developments in my field of study?

Librarian Julie Sibthorpe replies:

There are many ways to keep up with developments in your field. You can use automated systems to obtain email alerts from library databases, or use RSS feeds from a publisher's website. But there are smart and easy ways too, such as joining an organisation or going along to a conference.

Why is it important to stay current?

While you are writing your thesis you need to make sure you know who else is working in the same field, worldwide. At one time that would have been a very difficult thing to do, and this is one of the reasons the academic community were keen to assist in developing the Internet. Now you can see what work is being published as theses and dissertations are published daily online in databases and websites such as ProQuest Theses and Dissertations.

How do I go about it? - Ask someone!

1. First use your people resources!

- The best place to start is your supervisor, who can recommend contacts in universities throughout the world.
- Many databases, like Scopus for example, allow you to locate an academic author's place of work and contact details.
- Talk to your subject librarian! Everyone has access to a friendly librarian to help you sort through the large amount of published resources and sift it down to the good material.
- Social software helps too. Join a relevant listserv or email group: <http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/gateway/elists.htm> or in <http://www.lsoft.com>
- Professional organisations or communities record new publications, and also create opportunities to meet others. The following sites are lists of scholarly associations and organisations:
 - **Scholarly Societies Project**
<http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/society/overview.html>
Has links to Internet sites for over 1100 scholarly societies/resource centres in about 30 categories

- **Associations and scholarly societies**
<http://www.union.edu/Library/refroom/associations.htm>
Searchable subject index of 16,000 nonprofit organisations around the world
- **IdeaList**
<http://www.idealists.org/>
20,000 nonprofit and community organisations around the world
- **World Directory of Think Tanks**
<http://www.nira.go.jp/ice/>
National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA) Home Page
- **Associations on the Net**
<http://www.ipl.org/div/aon/>
Over 2000 Internet sites provide information about a variety of professional and trade associations.
- **International Organization and NGO Web Sites**
<http://www.uia.org/extlinks/pub.php>
Over 3,500 international organizations and congresses, NGOs, and multi-national organization sites
- Blogs and wikis provide steadily updated information in subject fields. Try to find a suitable blog to join:
<http://www.academicblogs.org/wiki/index/php/MainPage>
or <http://www.blogscholar.com>

2. Alert! Alert! Setting up automatic notifications from library databases

Wouldn't it be great if you got mail?

Many library databases can provide an email or RSS service which alerts you automatically when new material has been added. They can find a new article—by *subject*, by *author's name* or alert you to the publication of a *new issue* of your favourite journal. They can even send you a *Table of Contents* page, of a new journal issue. Not all databases provide this service.

There are 5 steps to follow but the most important step is to:

1. Register and identify yourself. You are creating an account with a unique id and password.
2. Search for your topic using keywords/ author name
3. Save your searches (search history) in the database.
4. Name you search and decide how often you want to see the results (weekly , monthly etc)
5. Save your alert. Searches can be modified any time when you login with your password.

For step by step instructions and a list of databases which provide alerting services click this in-depth guide.


http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/docs/handouts/staying_%20current.pdf

3. What about new books?

- Use new books lists on your University Library websites.
- Publishers also provide email alerts from their websites, and you can choose to receive these as RSS feeds too.
- Databases like *Global Books in Print*, advise of new books as they are published.

- You can check Internet services such as the *Internet Resources Newsletter* (<http://www.hw.ac.uk/libwww/irn>) a free monthly newsletter covering mainly science, technology and the social sciences.
- Online bookshops including Amazon & Borders can give you up to date news about newly received books.

4. What are RSS Feeds?

These are automatic feeds from a website or blog which arrive in your browser. If you are using a variety of terminals, use a Blog aggregator, such as <http://www.bloglines.com>, which saves you having to check each terminal for updates of new information. Look for the sign for RSS Feeds 

5. What's in the news?

There are so many other sources for finding news about a subject field.

- News databases such as *Factiva*, or RSS Feeds from the newspapers
- ProQuest databases like *Dissertations and Theses*
- Check this page at University of Auckland for help with worldwide publishing of theses <http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/thesis/>
- Check for upcoming conferences <http://www.conferencealerts.com> or <http://www.allconferences.com>
- Try Google Scholar regularly for up-to-date academic articles. Click on the limit "Recent articles" and select the latest year or two.

There are many ways to keep up, so don't get caught out and miss an important article for your research. Talk to your librarian for more help with setting up an alerting system.

Write to Julie at: j.sibthorpe@auckland.ac.nz

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Acknowledgements: The author has used material from a workbook entitled "*Staying current*". The material was developed for a workshop run as part of the Doctoral Skills programme at University Auckland, New Zealand. It was compiled by Susan Brookes and Julie Sibthorpe.