Using JSTOR to Start Your Research

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Writing a paper can be overwhelming. If you're a student who is not familiar with JSTOR, we're here to help! This guide will give you steps to use to create a search based on your topic or assignment, narrowing that search to the best results for you, and using a variety of JSTOR features to help organize your writing efforts.

What's in This Article:

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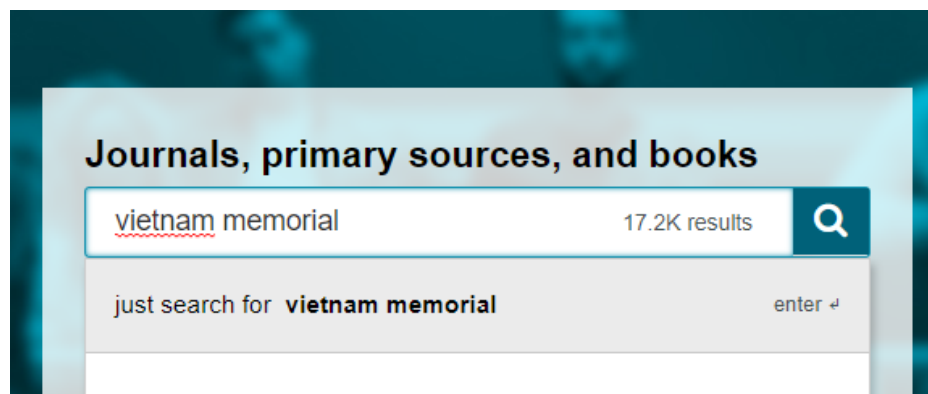

Creating a Search Based on Your Topic

Let's say you get this assignment:

Using library research, identify a monument you want to research. Find at least five resources that give you a sense of that monument's history: the event that precipitated the memorial, the origins of the memorial, any controversies surrounding the monument, etc. What is the dominant narrative this site tells and what is the subversive narrative that may be read between the lines?

(Note that all of the content on JSTOR are from scholarly sources, but some of the older content may not be [peer-reviewed](#). Make sure you're sure whether you need peer-reviewed items before starting.)

First, we have to choose a monument. For our purposes, let's talk about the Vietnam Memorial. You can use "Vietnam Memorial" as the keywords in your search.

Once you've identified some keywords, the next thing you'll want to do is search the term to get a sense of what's available. Start by going to [jstor.org](#) and entering your keyword "Vietnam Memorial" in the search box. You might see a lot of results:

You can see in the screenshot, the estimate is that this search will get a lot of results (don't worry if your number isn't the same as this screenshot--different accounts have different levels of access).

There's no way to look through that many results, so you may want to decrease the number of results. Identify other keywords from your research project. If you enter "Vietnam Memorial narrative controversy," for example, in the search box, the search results decrease to around 2,000. Take a look at our JSTOR Search tips if you'd like to learn more ways to narrow your results even more. Here are some helpful places to start once you're ready to refine your results:

Boolean Searching will help you get really specific with your searches by expanding or narrowing what's included in the results.

Exact Phrase Searching is for when you're looking for something specific like an author name or article title.

Note: If you want to learn even more about how to do great research, take a look at our Research Basics course. This self-paced, online class will teach you what you need to know if you're new to academic research.
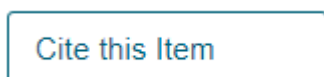
Saving Your Work

As you narrow your search, you'll start to see items you may want to read more closely. This is why creating a free personal account is really handy--signing in can help you keep track of your research, no matter what school or location you're accessing JSTOR from. Once your'e signed in, if you'd like to save articles you find helpful, you can keep track of them within the JSTOR website by clicking "Save" on the right side of the search results. The button looks like this:

Save

We have another article that shows you how to use Workspace for your research

If you prefer to use a different way to keep citations (like Endnote or RefWorks) you can click on "Cite this item" instead. The button looks like either:
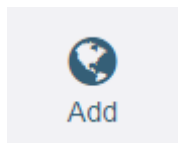
Cite this Item

OR

Cite

When you click "Cite" or "Cite this Item", it will give you the option to export the bibliographic information for that article to another citation manager system. You can learn more about exporting citations in [Citation Management: Exporting Citations from JSTOR](#).

What if you found citations on other places besides JSTOR, and you want to save all of that work in one place? You can add External References to your Workspace. Just go to your workspace, and click the button that says "Add."

You can click on any item in Workspace to be taken to the article page. Once there, you can share the article through our sharing tools for email or social media. You can read the article [through a participating institution](#) or [through one of our programs for independent researchers](#).

Other ways to find content

Advanced Search

If you have a very complicated search, you may want to use the [Advanced Search](#). This will allow you to break up a big search into smaller pieces. Using the Advanced Search on JSTOR can help you get really specific about the kinds of content you want to see. For example, if you only want to see journal articles, not books, you can check off journals in the "Narrow By: Item Type" section of that page.

Text Analyzer

If you've found a really helpful article on JSTOR and want to find more like it, you can use that article to do further searching through our [Text Analyzer feature](#). Just upload the document you found and Text Analyzer will find other articles similar to the one you upload.