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Database Support for Research in Public Administration

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ABSTRACT. This study examines the extent to which databases support student and faculty research in the area of public administration. A list of journals in public administration, public policy, political science, public budgeting and finance and other related areas was compared to the journal content list of six business databases. These databases included ABI/INFORM, Business Source Premier and General BusinessFile, Academic Search Premier, Expanded Academic Index and International Academic Research Library. The results show that Expanded Academic Index, Business Source Premier and International Academic Research Library have the most comprehensive holdings of public administration journals.

INTRODUCTION

Supporting scholarly research for the discipline of public administration can be a

difficult task for libraries. The discipline of public administration incorporates a

broad range of subjects including management, human resources, budgeting and finance,

political science and public policy, just to name a few. Due to the fact that the area of

public administration is eclectic and broad in scope, choosing the appropriate periodical

database to support scholarly research is a challenge. Periodical databases have had a

significant impact on collection development by offering the opportunity for a library to

purchase an increased amount of access to journals. When comparing the price of a

collection of individual journal subscriptions to the price of a subscription database, in

most cases, the subscription database allows the library to cost effectively meet patron's

research needs and expand the library's collection. In addition, periodical databases are

increasing full-text holdings of journals. This allows patrons to access information both

inside and outside the library. The full-text aspect of databases is becoming more

important because both faculty and students have increased their reliance on accessing journal articles electronically.

Due to the fact that choosing a periodical database(s) is important, it is vital to consider many different factors when evaluating a database. The initial factor is the varying degree of library patron academic status. Academic libraries serve undergraduate, graduate, doctoral and faculty patrons. The level of scholarly research needed changes from patron to patron depending on their status. Because the library is serving different research needs, it is important to choose a resource that fits all levels of research. Another factor in choosing a periodical database is subject coverage. In recent years there has been a proliferation of database options. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of public administration, the evaluation and analysis of existing options is vital. In order to make an informed decision, librarians and bibliographers must carefully evaluate each database and look at factors such as search capability and indexing. For the area of public administration, it is particularly important to choose a database with the appropriate interdisciplinary subject coverage. Another factor is journal coverage for each database including abstracts available, number of full-text access, and depth and breadth of coverage. Budgetary issues are also a concern. Academic libraries are facing budget cuts and this impacts the amount of money that can be spent on resources.

The purpose of this study is to provide in-depth analysis on which databases support research at all academic levels in the area of public administration. Six databases were used in the study. Three business databases were chosen because of the management, human resource, and financing elements of public administration. The business databases used in the study include ABI/Inform Global (Proquest), Business

Source Premier (EBSCO), and General Business File ASAP (Gale). Due to the fact that public administration covers a wide variety of subjects, three multidisciplinary databases were used in the study. The three multidisciplinary databases used in the study include Expanded Academic Index ASAP (Gale), Academic Search Premier (EBSCO) and International Academic Research Library (ProQuest).

The database journal holdings were compared to a list of journals for public administration. The databases were analyzed for levels of journal coverage content based on three criteria: abstract only, full-text and full-text with embargo. Using Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, the journals were divided into five subject areas including public administration, political science, public finance, economics and management, public policy, and other related areas. The journal coverage content was also compared to the length of time for past journal coverage.

PRODUCT BACKGROUNDS

The first database in the comparison is ABI/INFORM Global edition (ABI), which is produced by ProQuest Information and Learning. The Global edition consists of 2,195 sources with 1,230 available full-text. There are 977 scholarly/peer reviewed sources available in the Global edition. Most journal coverage dates back to 1971. Most of the full-text availability begins in the early 1990s.

The second database in the comparison is Business Source Premier, produced by EBSCO Information Services. Business Source Premier (BSP) provides access to 4,685 sources with 3,857 sources available in full-text format. There are 1,725 peer reviewed sources in this database. Most journal coverage dates back to the early 1980s; however, EBSCO has created a back file project with many journals available from first date of

publication. Full-text availability begins in the early 1990s.

General BusinessFile ASAP (GBF), produced by the Gale Group, provides access to 3,121 articles with 1,762 available full-text. Journal coverage dates back to the early 1980s with most full-text available in the early 1990s.

International Academic Research Library (IARL), produced by ProQuest, is a general reference database that includes 3,058 journals with over 1,977 available full-text. There are approximately 1,715 peer reviewed/scholarly journals in this database.

Academic Search Premier (ASP), produced by EBSCO Information Services, is a multidisciplinary database with 8,040 journals with over 4,600 full-text. ASP contains 6,679 peer reviewed/scholarly journals with 3,529 available full-text.

The last database to be examined is Expanded Academic Index ASAP (EAI) from the Gale Group. This is another multi disciplinary database with 2,167 full-text journals and a total of 3,525 journals indexed. The number of refereed journals in this database is 2,061.

<center>**LITERATURE REVIEW**</center>

There have been several articles written related to analysis of databases. Blessinger and Olle (2003) conducted a study at Louisiana State University Libraries comparing three aggregator databases: EBSCO's Academic Search Premier, Gale's Expanded Academic Index ASAP, and ProQuest's Research Library Core. The databases were compared using three criteria including title list, full-text availability and search features. The study concluded that the two most important features when selecting a database are title lists and search capabilities. The study showed that EBSCO provides the highest percentage of indexed and full-text titles. In relation to search capabilities,

ProQuest offered the most intuitive search capabilities including well designed interfaces and limiting searches.

Chapman (2002) wrote an article analyzing full-text database support for doctoral level research in the area of finance. The study analyzed a list of articles cited by finance researchers and compared the list to the title list of three full-text databases. The article compared the title lists of ABI/INFORM Global, Business Source Elite, and General BusinessFile. The results showed that not all the databases provide strong support or even adequate support for scholarly research. The results also illustrated that ABI/INFORM and General BusinessFile had the highest citation error rates. The final conclusion was that the most comprehensive coverage was offered by ABI/INFORM Global.

Davidson, Salisbury & Baily (2000) analyzed Bell and Howell's PA Research II and H.W. Wilson's WilsonSelect and compared the databases on several factors including content, user interface, user help, delivery capacity and other issues related to collection development. The study concluded that PA Research II provided better controlled vocabulary searching, output formats, durable links to library's catalog and journal title browsing. The WilsonSelect database strengths included 100 percent full-text, sorting and phrase searching.

Still and Kassabian (1999) examined three periodical database systems consisting of ProQuest, Periodical Abstracts, and EBSCOhost. The comparison was of full-text general periodical indices for undergraduate students. The factors explored included breadth and depth of coverage, manipulation of results, exporting features, ease of use (searching), and indexing quirks. The results of the article varied. In regards to the

breadth and depth aspect, the study showed that when searching the same issue, EBSCOhost had more articles than ProQuest. As far as obtaining title lists for each database, ProQuest had easier accessibility of lists than EBSCO and Periodical Abstracts. In manipulation of results, Periodical Abstracts and EBSCO had more results than ProQuest when using the search term "greenhouse effect." Also, exporting was more efficient in Periodical Abstracts and EBSCO. EBSCO was found to have the most ease and the most easily understandable features. When comparing the databases on indexing quirks, the results varied. The authors suggest that when selecting databases the most important feature is how the product is going to be used in real-life situations. These situations include ease of use and distance learning considerations.

Other research connected with online databases has involved evaluating title coverage of full-text periodical databases. In their 1999 article, Brier and Lebbin discuss evaluating title coverage of databases in relation to a library's print journal collection. Title coverage was assessed through a conceptual model comparing abstracts and full-text titles of three databases including EBSCOhost Academic Search, Expanded Academic Index ASAP, and Periodical Abstracts Research II. The databases were evaluated from the standpoint of an undergraduate's information seeking habits and their anticipated choices when confronted with a range of retrieval options, including abstracts and full-text articles. The resources were also evaluated by which database was most likely to lead users to reliable information. The results showed that Periodical Abstracts Research II had the best full-text value. Expanded Academic Index provided the best abstract value. The analysis shows that when comparing databases, librarians should investigate both full-text and abstract coverage. The results also show that libraries

should take into consideration the existing print collection before choosing a database.

METHODOLOGY

To test the coverage of the six databases, a list of journals in public administration were compared to the journal title lists of each database. The journals were chosen using two methods. First, a search of the ISI Journal Citation Report was conducted for the area of public administration. The search was conducted using an impact factor analysis. The ISI Journal Citation Report was conducted in July, 2004. This search resulted in a list of twenty-five journals. A literature search was also conducted and three other resources were used. Forrester & Watson (1994) conducted a study where editors and editorial board members were surveyed and asked to rank the top ten journals for public administration in the fields of policy analysis, budgeting and finance, personnel administration, and organizational studies. The study identified a total of thirty-six journals. The last resource used for this study was two accreditation reports from the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). The NASPAA's website provides several examples of accreditation reports. Two of the accreditation reports included a "core" list of journals for public administration. The report from the University of Nebraska Omaha identified 28 journals. The report from the California State University at Long Beach identified 65 journals. The four lists were compiled. A total number of 95 journals were identified. The list of journals was divided into six subject categories using Ulrich's Periodicals Directory. The subject categories include public administration, political science, public finance, management and economics, public policy, and other social science titles.

The title lists for the six databases were obtained from the vendor's Websites.

The list of journals in each discipline was compared to the title coverage list for each database. To check the reliability of each database title list, each title was searched in the respective database to confirm that the title was held. Data taken from the database was divided into four categories: journal title, abstracts held, full-text held, and full-text with embargo held. The abstract category was included because abstracts are commonly used by researchers at all levels to obtain articles. Although the abstract of a journal may be the only format in a database, it is useful for researchers because it alerts them to articles of interest; thus, the abstract may be used to search the library's catalog for a print or electronic format of a journal or used to place an interlibrary loan request. Full-text with embargo was used because this does allow the researcher to access the journal, albeit with a delay. For each category (excluding journal title), the scope of coverage was noted to identify the depth of coverage.

The depth of each database was measured by selecting similar journal holdings and formats and noting the coverage of the journal. For each database, a list of journals that were "owned" by all six databases was compiled. Each journal was analyzed as far as coverage in abstract, full-text and full-text with embargo format. The coverage dates for each database were analyzed to see which one provided deeper coverage. To ensure reliable analysis, journals were compared using a consistent format. For example, if a journal is available in both abstract and full-text for one database and only available in abstract format in another, the journal coverage was analyzed for abstracts only. Full-text coverage will be measured in a separate section of this paper. The final comparison among the databases was made in relation to subject coverage within the public administration field. Databases were analyzed for their coverage in the areas of public

administration, political science, public finance, management and economics, public

policy and other social science related journals.

There are some limitations of the methodology to take into consideration. The list

of journals was carefully compiled to include the most often cited or mentioned journals.

However, due to the fact that public administration is so eclectic, the entire scope and

range of the discipline may not be represented. Also, database coverage is dynamic and

this may affect the results in this study.

RESULTS

TABLE 1. Public Administration Journal Coverage

Database	Abstract	Full-Text	Full-Text w/Embargo
ABI/Inform	48	17	4
Academic Search Premier	52	10	14
Business Source Premier	63	16	18
Expanded Academic Index ASAP	68	23	4
General Business File ASAP	30	7	1
Int'l Academic Research Library	57	22	4

The results in Table I and Table II show that Expanded Academic Index ASAP

(EAI), Business Source Premier (BSP), and International Academic Research Library

(ARL) provide the best overall coverage for research in public administration. As far as

full-text coverage is concerned, EAI and ARL provide the best coverage of the six

databases. Looking at journal coverage full-text with an embargo, BSP and ASP have the

most journals available.

TABLE 2. Percent of Journals Owned Full-Text

Database	Percent Owned
ABI/Inform	18%
Academic Search Premier	10.5%
Business Source Premier	17%
Expanded Academic Index ASAP	24%
General Business File ASAP	7%
Int'l Academic Research Library	23%

The evaluation of subject coverage of journals in the area of public administration displayed obvious strengths and weaknesses for each database.

Table 3. Total Journal Coverage by Subject

Subject	ABI	ARL	ASP	BSP	EAI	GBF
Public Admin	13	8	4	15	12	7
Political Science	3	16	18	7	18	2
Public Finance	19	8	1	19	9	13
Public Policy	4	9	9	9	9	2
Other	9	16	20	13	18	6
Total	48	57	52	63	65	30

Table 3 demonstrates that the in the area specific to public administration, BSP, ABI and EAI have the best coverage. In political science, EAI, ASP, and ARL have the best coverage. The results for public finance show that BSP, ABI, and GBF have the most journals. For public policy, four journals have similar coverage including EAI, ARL, ASP, and BSP. For the miscellaneous(other) journals, the databases that performed the best were ASP, EAI, and ARL.

Table 4. Full-Text Journal Coverage by Subject

Subject	ABI	ARL	ASP	BSP	EAI	GBF
Public Admin	4	2	0	4	2	1
Political Science	2	7	1	3	7	1

Public Finance	6	4	0	5	5	3
Public Policy	0	2	1	2	3	0
Other	5	7	8	3	6	2
Total	17	22	10	17	23	7

The trend in academic libraries is to provide patrons with full-text electronic formats of journals whenever possible. Table 4 and Table 5 measure the full-text coverage for each discipline. For public administration specific journals, ABI and BSP had the most journals available full-text. For political science, the databases that performed the best were ARL and EAI. Public Finance related coverage was best in ABI, BSP, and EAI. Public Policy had the weakest full-text coverage of all disciplines.

Table 5 measures full-text with an embargo. The best performance in this measurement was between BSP and ASP.

Table 5. Full-Text w/Embargo by Subject

Subject	ABI	ARL	ASP	BSP	EAI	GBF
Public Admin.	0	0	1	4	2	0
Political Science	0	1	6	3	0	0
Public Finance	1	0	0	5	1	1
Public Policy	2	2	5	4	0	0
Other	1	1	2	2	1	0
Total	4	4	14	18	4	1

Comparing the databases for depth of coverage brought some interesting results. As stated earlier, each subject list was examined and the journals that were subscribed to by all six databases were noted. The comparison analyzed the holdings for abstract, full-text and full-text with embargo. The comparison showed that that Business Source Premier and Academic Search Premier had superior depth of journal coverage in all three areas. This is a result of the aggressive "backfile" project currently underway at Ebsco.

CONCLUSION

The results show that the three best databases for public administration are Expanded Academic Index ASAP, Business Source Premier, and International Academic Research Library. The three business databases were strong in public administration and public budgeting, economics, and finance. The three multidisciplinary databases were strong in political science and the miscellaneous category. In addition to its strong political science holdings, Expanded Academic Index ASAP was also well represented in public administration. Business Source Premier also performed well with its coverage in non-business areas. Overall, the best resource for public administration is Expanded Academic Index ASAP.

The results illustrate that subject librarians and bibliographers in the area of public administration should carefully evaluate each database to see which one best fits the needs of the library and patrons. Another factor to keep in mind is that journal coverage in a database may vary every year or so. Journals may be dropped or added.

The results also indicate that one full-text database may not be sufficient for academic research in public administration. Due to the eclectic nature of public administration, libraries may have to purchase one or more of the databases listed to provide enough scholarly resources. If this is the case, the issue of duplication and overlapping coverage must be taken into consideration.

When evaluating a database several factors must be analyzed including subject coverage, depth, and full-text availability. There are other factors to take into consideration that this study did not cover including usability, exporting features, indexing, and price. Evaluating all of these factors helps ensure the proper database selection for the library and its patrons and also ensures that library funds are wisely

spent.

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APPENDIX
JOURNALS BY AREA

Public Administration (20)

Administrative Science Quarterly
Administration & Society
American Review of Public Administration
Australian Journal of Public Administration
Canadian Public Administration
Environment & Planning C
Government Information Quarterly
International Journal of Public Administration
International Review of Administrative Sciences
Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory
National Civic Review
Public Administration
Public Administration Development
Public Administration Quarterly
Public Administration Review
The Public Manager
Public Performance & Management Review
Public Personnel Management
Review of Public Personnel Administration
State and Local Government Review

Political Science (21)

American Journal of Political Science
American Political Science Review
American Politics Research
Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science
British Journal of Political Science
Comparative Political Studies
Governance
Journal of Peace Research
Philosophy & Public Affairs
Political Psychology
Political Research Quarterly
Political Science Quarterly
Political Studies
Polity
Presidential Studies Quarterly
Public Choice
The Public Interest
Public Opinion Quarterly

Publius
Review of Politics
World Politics

Public Finance, Economics & Management (19)

Academy of Management Review
Contemporary Economic Policy
Economic Development & Cultural Change
Economic Inquiry
Financial Accountability & Management
Government Finance Review
History of Political Economy
International Journal of Public Sector Management
Journal of Accounting & Public Policy
Journal of Management Studies
Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management
Journal of Public Economics
Journal of Transport Economics & Policy
Municipal Finance Journal
National Tax Journal
Public Budgeting & Finance
Public Finance Review
Public Money Management
RAND Journal of Economics

Public Policy (13)

Canadian Public Policy
Journal of European Public Policy
Journal of Health Politics, Policy & Law
Journal of Policy Analysis & Management
Journal of Policy History
Journal of Public Policy
Journal of Social Policy
Milbank Quarterly
Policy & Politics
Policy Sciences
Policy Studies Journal
Review of Policy Research
World Policy Journal

Miscellaneous (22)

Administration in Social Work
Comparative Education Review

Crime & Delinquency
Educational Administration Quarterly
Education & Urban Society
Evaluation Review
Health Affairs
Human Relations
Journal of Conflict Resolution
Journal of Urban Affairs
Law & Society Review
Organization Studies
Simulation & Gaming
Social Forces
Social Science Quarterly
Social Work
Society
Social Security Bulletin
Transportation Journal
Transportation Quarterly
Transportation Science
Urban Affairs Review