

## **HOW TO LOCATE BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES IN PHILOSOPHY**

When one thinks about a philosophical topic or writes a paper on such a topic, it is often useful to consider what other people have written on the topic; in other words, it is often useful to consult *bibliographic sources*. There are four main kinds of such sources: (1) journal articles, (2) articles in edited books, (3) monographs (i.e., books that are not collections of articles), and (4) internet documents. Locating bibliographic sources comes usually in two stages. First, the *exploratory* stage, with the aim of *identifying* (i.e., finding information such as the author and the title of) some, all, or the most important documents that relate to a given topic. Second, the *targeted* stage, with the aim of *obtaining* (a copy of) specific documents that one has already identified. What follows is divided into two parts that deal respectively with these two stages.

### **I. THE EXPLORATORY STAGE: HOW TO IDENTIFY DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO A GIVEN TOPIC**

1. Some people start by doing an *internet search*, using a standard search engine such as Google (but note that it is much better to use Google Scholar, at <http://scholar.google.com/>). There are at least two reasons why this may not be a good *starting point*.
  - a. Internet searches often yield bibliographic sources of a specific kind, namely internet documents. Such documents usually do not go through a peer review process (about *anything* can be published on the internet), so they are in general of *lower quality* than bibliographic sources of other kinds, such as journal articles, which do go through a peer review process.
  - b. Internet searches usually yield very large numbers of (mostly irrelevant) items, so one usually needs to narrow down the search by entering more specific keywords (e.g., "dyadic deontic logic" instead of "moral reasoning"). But the relevant specific keywords are normally *technical* terms with which one may not be familiar in the *beginning* of the exploratory stage.
2. It is better to start by consulting reference works in philosophy, such as (a) the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available online through the University of Wisconsin libraries, at <http://library.wisc.edu>), (b) the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (at <http://plato.stanford.edu>), and (c) the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (at <http://iep.utm.edu>). Articles in all three encyclopedias have extensive lists of references.
3. The most comprehensive database for work in philosophy is the *Philosopher's Index* (available online through the University of Wisconsin libraries). It lists journal articles, articles in edited books, book reviews, and monographs. Most entries include abstracts, whose text can also be searched.
4. To identify journal articles that *refer* (and thus are in general directly relevant) to a *specific* journal article, one can use the *Arts & Humanities Citation Index* (in the *Web of Science*, available online through the University of Wisconsin libraries).
5. Finally, it is a good idea to search the catalog of the University of Wisconsin libraries.

### **II. THE TARGETED STAGE: HOW TO OBTAIN SPECIFIC DOCUMENTS**

1. A very good way to find journal articles is to use the "Find Articles" tool on website of the University of Wisconsin libraries, at <http://library.wisc.edu>. This is very comprehensive, and in many cases one can easily download the articles. (Note that this tool is also very helpful at the exploratory stage.)
2. Other documents (e.g., books) may be available through the university libraries; otherwise, they can normally be obtained through interlibrary loan (<http://library.wisc.edu/borrow-request/interlibrary-loan>).
3. Note finally that many classic philosophical texts (e.g., by authors such as Aristotle and Kant) are available online (e.g., through <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books> or <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>).