I don't know where to start. What do I do?
   Ask for help. Most information is on the library's website, but anyone who works in the library will help—just ask. library.nsula.edu

Should I just ask the student at the desk, or is it OK to knock on an office door for help?
   Both are OK. Although librarians often work in offices, their primary job is to help you.

Can I make a copy of something here?
   There is computer printing in the computer labs and Watson's reference area. Use a free scanner to digitally copy part of a document. (There's one on each floor.) Federal copyright laws govern the use of copying, so read the instructions carefully and don't overdo it.

I don't understand how to use the databases. Can you help?
   That's what we're here for. Here are some notes to get you started.
   Most databases share a similar design and user interface, but not all have the same options. Examine the screen of a database you are using for the first time to see what features it offers. Ask a librarian for help when you get stuck. If we look busy, we are--but you are our first priority. Call (318) 357-4574 or (318) 357-6263, or text to (318) 228-5150.

Basic Searching through FindIt @ NSULA Libraries!
   On the main webpage, use the simple search box. Type in your keyword. If you want to create a more specific search, try the Advanced Search option, or use the Library Catalog's advanced search option. Individual databases can also be searched with one basic keyword, though such a search is usually less effective than a more careful search strategy.

How Does Advanced Searching Work?
   --Use one or more search terms
   --Search by author, subject, journal title, etc.
   --More help at the end of this FAQ.

Ask-A-Librarian. Having trouble with an EBSCO database? Click the link at the upper right corner of the page you are on to send an email. Enter your official NSU email address and detail your question or the problem you are having with the database. Make sure you leave the “Include Current Search history” box checked so we can give you better assistance. A librarian will respond to your inquiry as quickly as possible.

What's the Circulation Department?
   In the library world, book check-out and check-in are called "circulation." Your NSU ID is your library card. Items may be checked out for a period of 21 days and renewed once online, or twice in person at the circulation desk. Borrowing privileges expire at the end of each semester, so be sure to get a new sticker on your ID each semester you are enrolled, or each year you are employed. The fine for returning an item late ("overdue") is $1 per day. (318) 357-4477.
Can you get me an article or a book that's not in the catalog?

Probably. Libraries call that process "interlibrary loan." Call (318) 357-5465.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL) allows NSU Libraries to obtain books and articles not available locally. Books, journal articles, government documents, newspaper articles, theses, and dissertations can be borrowed.

To request a book through the online NSU Interlibrary Loan system ("ILLiad"), register at [http://library.nsula.edu/interlibrary-loan/](http://library.nsula.edu/interlibrary-loan/) with your NSU credentials. All students, faculty, and staff of NSU, including its satellite campuses, BPCC at NSU, LSMSA, and Friends of the Library, may use ILL. The average time it takes to fill a request is 3-5 business days.

NSU also fills requests from other libraries. If you are not near one of our campuses, contact your local public or parish library. They can request items held by NSU (or any other library) to be delivered to you at that library.

May I come to the library just to study?

Libraries do provide many quiet areas for reading and study throughout the buildings: tables, chairs, sofas, and small-group study rooms are open to all. A number of small private study rooms ("carrels") with locks are available on the second and third floors of Watson Library, for faculty and graduate students. To get one, go to Watson 309, fill out an application, and pay a one-time key deposit of $10.

Carrels are also available at NSU Leesville. Ask at the circulation desk for information.

Where are the books? In the stacks. (See next question.)

What are "stacks"? What is "reference"? What do these words mean? Here's a list of library terms, in alphabetical order.

**Abstract.** A summary of a scholarly article or book, including its thesis, methodology, and main points.

**Book.** A written work that has been published by being printed on pages bound together in covers. Also called a volume, a text, or a monograph. Books are written to be read slowly. Reference books are not; they are there to consult for information.

**Call number.** At NSU, most physical items are organized on rows of shelves (called "stacks") using the Library of Congress classification system. For example, a novel called *Red Mars*, by Kim Stanley Robinson, is at call number PS3568 .O2893 R44 1993 in the second-floor stacks, while a nonfiction work by Paul Raeburn, titled *Mars: Uncovering the Secrets of the Red Planet*, may be found at call number QB641 .R34 1998.

However, U.S. government publications use a different system, and all are located in the Government Information room behind circulation on the first floor of Watson. A *Mars Pathfinder Fact Sheet: Mission Summary* from NASA has the call number NAS 1.2:M 35/8. The Cammie G. Henry Research Center also uses a different filing system for its document collections.

Electronic documents in databases do not use call numbers; they are found only by search terms.
Carrel. A very small private study room, usually locked, assigned upon request to faculty and graduate students. (See the carrel question above.)

Circulation Desk. Located at the front of the library, the circulation desk is where you check out library books, reserves, and other materials. Your NSU ID is your library card. Be sure to get a new validation sticker every semester.

Database. A collection of electronic information records. Library databases are organized by bibliographical tags in searchable fields, which allows for much more precise searching than do keyword searches on the open Internet. Libraries usually collect index databases (citation or bibliographical information only), catalogs, abstracts, and databases of full- or mostly full-text journal articles.


Find It (Discovery Search). Located on the library's homepage, this electronic tool searches almost all library resources, including most databases and the library catalog. Use it for simple searches to find books, journal articles, government documents, archives, and other information on your topic. For more precise and focused searches, use a specific database or the catalog.

Government Information. (Also called "government documents.") Material of any kind that is published and distributed by the United States federal government. Government information can be accessed in a variety of formats, including print, microfiche, CD/DVD, or through the open Internet.

Index. Similar to a catalog, but for periodical articles as well as books. Includes bibliographical description but not full text.

Library Catalog. A descriptive list and finding aid for all books and other physical items owned, or "held," by a library (often also includes ebooks and print journals, but not articles). Contains information about the item and indicates where in library the item is kept and whether it is available for check-out.

Periodical. A magazine or other journal that is issued "periodically" (at regular "periods": monthly, weekly, yearly, etc.). Sometimes called "serials" (in a series), especially if the periods are not regular. There are several types of periodicals, or serials.

- Journal—Usually refers to a scholarly or academic periodical. For example, Journal of the American Medical Association, Nursing Science Quarterly, the Faulkner Review.
- Trade publication--usually an official publication of a professional or trade organization (like the American Medical Association or the American Library Association). Sometimes a scholarly association will publish one or more highly specialized research journals plus a shorter, less technical one.
- Magazine--Usually refers to a general-interest periodical. For example, People Magazine, Time Magazine, Sports Illustrated, Rolling Stone, Gourmet Magazine.
- Newspaper--Daily or weekly publication of on folded sheets that includes news, articles, features, and advertisements. For example, The Natchitoches Times, the Baton Rouge Advocate, the New York Times.

**Research.** The process of finding information you do not already know, or the creation of new knowledge. Googling something on a computer phone is a very informal kind of research. Producing a doctoral dissertation, though much more formal, is also research. Most course assignments are between these extremes. University coursework is usually carefully documented and formal in style. Ask a question to start your search.

**Reference Department.** The Reference Desk is the place to ask for help with research and library resources. "Reference" is help finding information to "refer" to, so reference books are collections of easy-to-use information: encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, manuals, atlases, but also subject-specific works which can be highly specialized and scholarly.

**Reserves.** Articles or books "reserved" at the Circulation Desk for a particular course or as part of an assignment. These may be checked out for a short period for use in the library building.

**Search Term.** The word or words that describe your search in a library catalog or a database. "Keyword" is similar but searches the entire text of a document, whereas databases allow you to specify one or more bibliographic fields to search.

**Serials/Media Department.** Located on the third floor of the library, this is where journals, audio, video, microfilm, and other media are kept. See also "Periodical."

**Stacks.** A stack is a range of bookshelves in a library building.

**More about Online Searching.** Most databases share a similar design and user interface, but not all have the same options. Examine the screen of a database you are using for the first time to see what features it offers. Here are listed the usual choices.

**Refine Search**--when your first attempt retrieves thousands of results, here are several ways to focus, or "limit," your search results:

- Limit to full text.
- Search by publication date.
- Search by publication type.
- Limit to scholarly/peer reviewed journals.
- Limit to library catalog (for books, print journals, and other physical items).
Limit by language--if you only read one language, select this option in international databases such as MLA International Bibliography, Fuentes Academica, Economica y Negocios, MedicLatina, and Academic Search complete.

Major Concepts--A standardized word list, or thesaurus, used by the Biological Abstracts, PSYCInfo, CINAHL, and other subject-specific databases.

Narrow Results by Subject--A list of subject terms recommended by the database to make your search more specific, these terms are frequently linked to results of your original search. Click on a subject to add it to your existing search.

Publications--Use this option to see which journals are included in a database.

Subject Term--A word which indicates the subject or subtopics of articles. In advanced searches, there is a subject "field"(sometimes more than one) to specify this option.

Thesaurus--Unlike subject terms, a thesaurus is a subject-oriented standardized vocabulary assembled by librarians, database creators, or professional scholarly associations. Use a thesaurus if you have trouble thinking of keywords for a search.

Options with EBSCO. Most of NSU's library databases are rented to us by the commercial vendor EBSCO, which provides extra options to those who establish an individual MyEBSCOHost account. (It is not necessary to register with EBSCO just to search its databases.) To use these free features, click on the "Sign In" tab and follow directions and use your NSU credentials to create a free account.

My Folder--Do not try to save items in your folder without logging in to your EBSCO account; they will be deleted after printing or when you close your browser window.

Saved Searches--Click the “Search History/Alerts” tab to save and retrieve your searches. A saved search stays in your folder and is available for you to re-run at any time to get updated results. To view your saved searches, click the “Retrieve Saved Searches” link or go to your folder and click on “Saved Searches.”

Search Alerts--Some databases send electronic notifications when new articles matching a search are added to the database. Select the “Search History/Alerts” tab, click the “Save Search as Search Alert” box, and fill in the required information (including your NSU email address). To view your search alerts, click on the “Retrieve Alerts” link or go to your folder and click “Search Alerts.”

Journal Alerts--Similar to a Search Alert for when a new issue of a specified journal is available. Go to the “Publications” tab to set up a Journal Alert.