

Sources for Cross-Discipline Literature Searches

By Annie Wescott, Research Librarian, MLIS

Topics in medicine do not always fit neatly under the biomedical umbrella. While [PubMed](#) may be the go-to resource for medical research for many, the landscape for health-related research is vast. There are several methods for locating cross-discipline literature, which range from searching multidisciplinary databases that index across subject areas, to non-biomedical, health-related databases, and finally to exploring specialized databases that are non-health discipline-specific.

Multidisciplinary Databases

The first step when searching for sources related to cross-disciplinary topics is to focus on a multidisciplinary database. Galter Library provides access to several comprehensive databases including, [Embase](#) (Elsevier), [Scopus](#) (Elsevier), and [Web of Science](#) (Clarivate). These databases allow users to perform a single search that quickly retrieves references from across a wide array of topic areas. For example, a research question focused on music therapy will find related journals in Medicine as well as Arts and Humanities.



Learn More about

PMC

PubMed Central

Health-Related Databases

Other databases are still under the health umbrella but index journals that are not strictly biomedical. Examples include [APA PsycINFO](#) (Ebsco), which explores topics in psychology and related fields, [CINAHL](#) (Ebsco), a database that indexes articles related to nursing and allied health, and Sociological Abstracts, which indexes sociology and behavioral sciences research. For physical therapy literature, there is [PEDro \(Physiotherapy Evidence Database\)](#), and [SPORTDiscus](#) is a bibliographic database that indexes sports and sports medicine research.

Those looking at topics related to global health should explore [Global Health](#) (Ebsco) or the World Health Organization's [Global Index Medicus](#), which also indexes content from more focused specialized databases like [African Index Medicus](#) and [LILACS](#), the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information. These databases provide access to global and regional perspectives in biomedical and public health literature.



Specialized Databases

Finally, there are several examples of discipline-specific databases that are useful for both basic literature reviews as well as comprehensive reviews on cross-disciplinary subjects. Galter librarians often include discipline-specific databases in their systematic and scoping reviews.

Business and Economic Research

[EconLit](#) (Ebsco) and [Business Source Premier](#) (Ebsco) are great choices for research that explores economic aspects of health care.

Computer Science, Technology, and Communications

[IEEE Xplore](#) and [ACM Digital Library](#) are two examples of discipline-specific databases that index journals that explore health-related topics within computer science or digital technologies. IEEE Xplore was searched by Galter librarian Annie Wescott for an article by Chang, et. al that explored digital and non-digital non-pharmacological interventions for the quality of life of patients with lupus (Chang, et. al 2021). Searching IEEE Xplore allowed the review team access to content specific to digital interventions that was not indexed in the traditional biomedical databases. For those researchers interested in digital media or social media, [Communication Source](#) (Ebsco) can supplement traditional medical research databases.

Education

Whether one is focusing on medical education topics or other concepts related to education in general, the [ERIC Database](#) (Education Research Information Center) is helpful resources for locating education research.

Literature searching, especially for a comprehensive review, often requires thinking outside of the medical literature. When research is focused on subject areas outside of medicine, other databases can help ensure recall of relevant research that would not be captured without the exploration of specialized resources. Liaison librarians at Galter Library can help identify unique databases for searching.



Examples of Cross-Disciplinary Searches in Comprehensive Reviews

- Chang A, Winquist NW, Wescott AB, Lattie EG, Graham AK. Systematic review of digital and non-digital non-pharmacological interventions that target quality of life and psychological outcomes in adults with systemic lupus erythematosus. *Lupus*. 2021;30(7):1058-1077. [doi:10.1177/09612033211005085](https://doi.org/10.1177/09612033211005085)

Specialized Database: IEEE Xplore

- Harris A, Philbin S, Post B, et al. Cost, Quality, and Utilization After Hospital-Physician and Hospital-Post Acute Care Vertical Integration: A Systematic Review. *Med Care Res Rev*. 2025;82(1):3-42. [doi:10.1177/10775587241247682](https://doi.org/10.1177/10775587241247682)

Specialized Database: EconLit

- Hensley CP, Kontos D, Feldman C, Wafford QE, Wright A, Chang AH. Reliability and validity of 2-dimensional video analysis for a running task: A systematic review. *Phys Ther Sport*. 2022;58:16-33. [doi:10.1016/j.ptsp.2022.08.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ptsp.2022.08.001)

Specialized Databases: PEDro, SPORTDiscus, and IEEE Xplore

- Light SW, Tomasino F, Wescott A, et al. Perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge of US Latino adults pertaining to dementia and brain health: a systematic review. *Aging Ment Health*. 2024;28(3):396-407. [doi:10.1080/13607863.2023.2268050](https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2023.2268050)

Specialized Database: LILACS

- Philbin SE, Harris A, Balbale S, Bilaver L, Beestrum M, McHugh M. Implementation of medications for opioid use disorder in U.S. emergency departments: A systematic review. *J Subst Use Addict Treat*. 2025;169:209600. [doi:10.1016/j.josat.2024.209600](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.josat.2024.209600)

Specialized Database: Sociological Abstracts

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