Transcript: Beyond books & articles: finding conference papers

Books and articles are often the primary sources of information researchers go to when they start searching library catalogues and databases. This video takes you beyond searching for books and articles and focuses on conference papers and proceedings.

We will first look into why conference papers are useful for your research. Then you will find out how to search for conferences on SOLO and also how to locate and access conference papers online.

Consulting conference papers as part of your research is important for a few reasons.

You can discover the latest research.

Results of research are made available through conference papers before being formally published in a journal.

It helps you maintain awareness of developments in your field and also you can see how research has been shaped from conference to journal article.

Many academics make their conference papers available freely online through their institutions' open access repositories. In Oxford's case, this is the Oxford Research Archive, which is linked to Google Scholar.

Conference papers can also be made available on host societies' web pages. A quick search for a paper's title on Google or Google Scholar will often find it.

If this doesn't work, you can always try SOLO. This will pull up conference proceedings which the library has purchased or received through Legal Deposit. You can search for the conference title in SOLO, Oxford Collections. If you don't have the full title, you can try some key words, such as organisation name, editor's name, location of conference, or date of conference.

A tip to bear in mind when conducting a general search for conference papers on SOLO is to use 'Congresses' as the subject term in the Advanced Search.

I will now demonstrate a conference search in SOLO.

Before you start your search, sign in with your Single Sign On.

Then go to Advanced Search and change the scope to Oxford Collections.

I will enter 'science fiction' into the first row. In the second row, I'll select Subject and type in Congresses.

The second result on the list of search results is classed as festival. While result number three is a conference.

If you don't find conference proceedings you need in Oxford or online, you can try searching other libraries, for example, Library Hub Discover, which includes holdings from UK research libraries, or the British Library and WorldCat catalogues. If you find a conference record in one of these catalogues, you can request it via Bodleian Libraries Inter-library loan service.

Most bibliographic databases will include records of conference papers and proceedings.
You can find subject-relevant databases via Databases A-Z on SOLO. Many databases allow you to limit results to conferences.

You could also try finding conference papers via grey literature resources, like Open Grey. Open Grey gives you access to 700,000 bibliographic references of grey literature produced in Europe. It allows you to export records and locate documents.

In addition to subjects relevant databases, there are those which specifically search for conference proceedings and papers. For example, Conference Papers Index, which is a part of ProQuest database, mostly covers scientific material. IEEE Conference Proceedings include physics, engineering, material science and computer science papers. There is also Conference Proceedings Citation Index, which is a part of Web of Science, and Papers First and Proceedings First, which are available via OCLC First Search. Finally, Zetoc, which is the British Library's table of contents service.

Conference Proceedings Citation Index is part of Web of Science interface. It covers references back to 1990 and can be limited to

Science, or Social Science and Humanities conferences. An effective search will often return a good set of results. However, in most cases you will not be able to link to full text. To find the full text you need to copy and paste the title into Google or Papers First, or search for the conference title in SOLO or Proceedings First.

I will now demonstrate a conference search in Web of Science.

We will start from SOLO. From SOLO, go to Databases A-Z. Then search for Web of Science.

In Web of Science, the search can be limited to conferences. You can untick other options offered in Web of Science core collections. I will search for keywords from the title 'Interactive Storytelling, the 10th International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling'. So, I will use 'interactive storytelling' and also the location and date of the conference. And change the scope to All Fields.

This gives us a list of results for the papers which are a part of this conference. If we click on Find it @Oxford, this will take us to the full text of the paper.

I will also show you a search example in Proceedings First. Again, we will start from SOLO, and go to Databases A-Z, then search for Proceedings First.

What I would like to search for is 'Analyzing the global human appropriation of net primary production'. So, I'll use some key words in case there are different versions of the title. Our result is on top of the page, and if we click Find it @Oxford button, that should take us to the full text of this paper where we will be able to download it in PDF format.

Zetoc is the British Library's electronic table of contents. It covers journals and conference proceeding from 1993 onwards. It also includes an email alerting service for articles and papers. If an item is in the British Library, you should be able to get it through Bodleian Inter-library loan service.

To summarise, many conference papers are freely available online and can be found by searching Google Scholar. Many general or subject databases allow you to search for conferences, but there are also databases specifically covering conference proceedings.

It is also important to mention that conference papers and proceedings could be difficult to find. Publication formats vary so you don't know what resource type you're looking for. It might be an article in a journal or a standalone report. They are also described in lots of different ways. For example, they may be referred to as conferences, proceedings, colloquium, symposiums or festivals. The titles will often include acronyms and abbreviated names of organizations which hosted them, and titles may change from one year to the next.

Sometimes conference papers take a long time to come out, which is a pity since they cover ground-breaking research. And sometimes they are not published at all or published only as abstracts.

However, the most recent papers can often be found on Google Scholar. And again, a reminder that you can ask your subject librarian to help you with your search and use the Inter-library loan service for printed papers not held in Oxford.

Handouts with some key links to sources of conference papers, exercises, and search tips
can be found on Bodleian LibGuides Workshop page.