

Transcript: Beyond books & articles: finding theses

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 theses and dissertations.

You will find out how to search for Oxford theses and dissertations and also how to locate theses and dissertations from other institutions.

Consulting someone else's theses as part of your research can be useful for a few reasons.

Theses contain relevant and up to date research.

They can be used as a springboard to scope existing literature.

They provide inspiration of what the finished product should look like.

You can discover ideas outside of a topic's consensus and also see how an author's ideas evolved over time.

To find Oxford's print theses, use SOLO for items from the 1920s onwards. In SOLO, you can also search for theses by supervisors or departments. If you can't find a thesis, contact your subject librarian and they will provide assistance and advice.

Some theses are digitally available via Oxford Research Archive or ORA, which is Oxford University's digital repository. Higher degree students registered since October 2007 are required to submit a digital copy of their thesis to ORA. ORA also contains digital scans of some older theses. Theses in ORA can be searched via SOLO. If a digital copy is not available as full text, please contact ORA staff. They might be able to contact the thesis author and arrange for you to receive a copy of the thesis for personal use.

To find a specific thesis on SOLO, use the author's surname and keywords from the title in your search. In Advanced Search select 'theses' as the resource type. It is also possible to browse theses supervised by a specific academic. You can use a supervisor's name as a search term. If you would like to browse theses by department, use the

department's name, but be aware that departments' names can change over time. You can also search by thesis type. For example, D.Phil. or M.Phil. can be used as search terms. However, typing Dphil or Mphil in a different format will bring back fewer results.

Now I will demonstrate a thesis search in SOLO.

When you open SOLO and before you start your search, sign in with your Single Sign On.

In SOLO, go to Advanced Search and change the scope to Oxford Collections'.

I will search for 'climate change' in all fields. And author 'Borgomeo'. 'Resource Type' should be set to 'Theses (Oxford)'.

Two results have been found for this thesis. The first one is an electronic copy. When you click on the green 'Online Access' link, a new tab is opened with the thesis entry on Oxford Research Archive. Here you can open and download full text of the thesis in PDF format.

In the second result in SOLO, 'Find & Request' link gives you the location of the print copy in the Bodleian. The majority of Oxford print theses are stored off site in a closed stack and have to be requested to one of the Bodleian Libraries reading rooms via SOLO.

If you want to find theses from other institutions, there are a few places you can search for them. You can find other databases which cover theses and dissertations at Databases A-Z, which can be accessed from SOLO front page. In the subject dropdown menu, you will find twenty databases listed for theses and dissertations. Two main databases are ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, and EThOS, which is the British Library e-theses online service.

ProQuest is the world's most comprehensive collection of theses and dissertations from around the world, offering millions of works from thousands of universities. ProQuest covers mostly North America and UK. There are 3.8 million dissertations and theses with over 1.7 million theses providing full text, although these are mostly US theses. Full text coverage spans from 1743 to the present and hundreds of thousands of theses are added each year.

On SOLO front page, we will go to Databases A-Z and search for ProQuest. We'll choose 'ProQuest Dissertations and Theses' and go to 'ProQuest Advanced Search'. You will search for the same dissertation we found in SOLO, and that is 'climate change'. And we'll search 'anywhere'. And in 'author' we will add 'Borgomeo'.

In the record find on the results list, there will be a link to full text. And clicking on that link, you will be taken to Oxford Research Archive, where you can access PDF copy of this thesis. Thesis record in ProQuest also contains an abstract, so you can decide whether this thesis is relevant for your research.

eThOS is a national aggregated record of all doctoral thesis awarded by UK higher education institutions available via the British Library. There are approximately 500,000 records relating to theses awarded by over 120 institutions. Around 260,000 of these also provide free access to the full text theses, either via download from the eThOS database or via links to the institution's own repository. However, for free downloads, you will need to create an account first. Of the remaining 220,000 records, dating back to at least 1800, three quarters are available to be ordered for scanning through the eThOS digitisation on demand facility.

To access eThOS, we will go back to SOLO front page and Databases A-Z. We will search for 'eThOS'. And again, use 'Advanced Search' to search for 'climate change' and author 'Borgomeo'.

The thesis record found on eThOS provides a full text link to ORA. And here you can access the PDF and download it.

If you are really stuck and haven't managed to track down full text of a thesis, you could try using OpenDOAR. OpenDOAR is a directory of academic open access repositories. You can search by institution's name or location, for example, Oxford or Cambridge, if you don't know the name of the repository.

You can ask your subject librarian about Bodleian Inter-Library Loan service, although a lot of universities don't lend theses.

You can also arrange a visit to the awarding university to consult the thesis there, but it is important to contact them first.

You can also contact the author of the thesis via LinkedIn or social media as they are often very happy to share their work.

Handouts with some key links for finding theses and dissertations, along with theses search exercise sheet, can be found on Bodleian LibGuides workshop page.