

Finding Datasets

Data Camp - 2025

Liz Novosel

Computer Science, Mathematics, & Social Sciences Librarian
elizabeth.novosel@colorado.edu

Today's Topics

- Finding Datasets
- Evaluating Datasets
- Connection to Scholarly Literature
- Finding Scholarly Literature



Related Library Guide:

<https://libguides.colorado.edu/findingdata/2025>

CAUTION: BAD DATA



**BAD DATA QUALITY
MAY RESULT IN
FRUSTRATION AND
LEAD TO DROP
KICKING YOUR
COMPUTER**

Reasons you might want to find a dataset?



-
- Have you ever needed to find one?
 - What did you look for?
 - What did you do with it?
 - Did you have any problems with it?

#1. Managing Expectations...



1. It may not exist
2. It may not be free
3. You may not be allowed to use it
4. Mimi Onuoha's [The Library of Missing Datasets](#)

Finding Datasets

1. **Define need: what topic, when, where, why**
2. **Get informed**
3. **Identify places to look**
4. **Search widely**
5. **Evaluate quality, ethics, & fit**

Identify Possible Sources: Who Collects This Data?

- Data sets must be created: collected, organized, stored, made accessible
- This takes time, money and effort
 - Who has the resources, responsibility/mandate, interest, in collecting this data?
 - Person? (Researcher? Scientist?)
 - Research organizations/labs?
 - Government [departments and agencies](#)? (EPA, Census Bureau?)
 - International organizations? (World Bank, World Health Organization)
 - Companies? (Facebook, Amazon, Pfizer, Academic Publishers)

Open Data, Closed Data...

Open Data: available to everyone

- Archived in an open repository
- Data sets are often required to be openly available by grant issuing agencies
- Publicly-funded research is already required to be available in an open-access repository (see [OSTP memo](#))

***ALSO: Some dataset owners require explanations of use to protect abuse.**

Proprietary Data: closed to public use

- Privately owned and funded; protected by copyright, patents, contracts, privacy protected
- May be related to software, business/financial information, or unpublished research (insurance data, health data, financial data, data protected by court order, recipes, designs, patterns)

What is metadata?

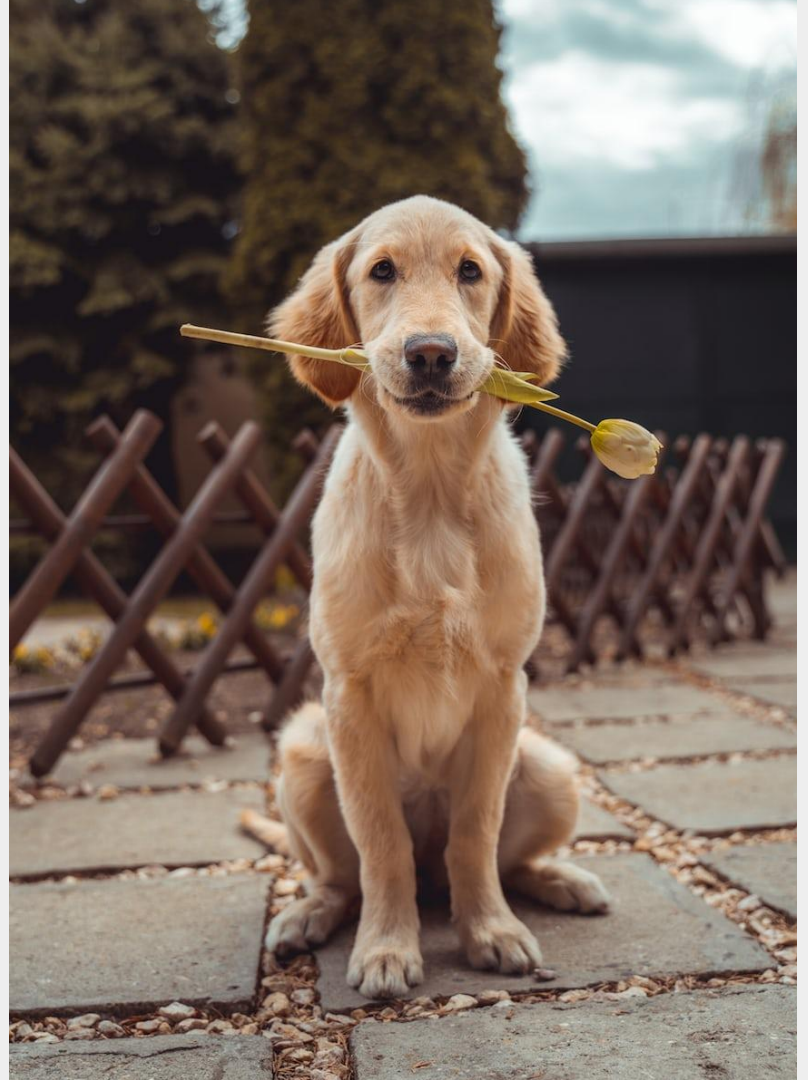
- **Different types:**
 - Licensing information (who can use the data and for what)
 - Technical requirements for using a dataset (how to use it)
 - The who, what, where, when, why and how the data was created
- **Where to find it:**
 - Readme file, data dictionary, codebook, attached file, repository page
- **Why is it important?**
 - Helps you use and understand a dataset

Examples of Metadata Standards

- [Astronomy Visualization Metadata](#)
- [Darwin Core](#)
- [Data Documentation Initiative \(DDI\)](#)
to document numeric data files
- [Dublin Core](#), a general purpose metadata standard
- ISO 19115 or FGDC's [Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Metadata](#) for geospatial data
- [Ecological Metadata Language](#)

Good Datasets

1. **Complete**
2. **Require minimal cleaning**
3. **Good metadata / documentation**
 - a. Explains data collection
 - b. Clear labels: variables, column headers
 - c. Clear about conflict of interest, source of funding
4. **License Information**
5. **Ethical & Protects privacy**
6. **Usable Format**



“Bad” Datasets

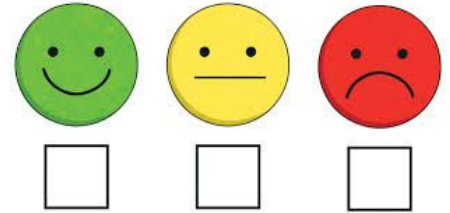
1. Incomplete or have errors
2. Formatting inconsistencies, require lots of cleaning
3. Outdated
4. No or poor documentation
 - a. No info about source
 - b. Poor labeling/metadata
5. Unethical/biased
6. Hard to use



Evaluate Datasets

1. Is the dataset:

- Usable: readable, well-documented, and available to all
- Functional format for software/analysis
- Complete, has good metadata (readme file!)
- Minimal “cleaning” or “wrangling” needed
- Data is current



2. Does it follow a Metadata Standard?

3. How was the data set created and why?

4. What kinds of bias or issues exist in the dataset?

5. Could the use of the dataset be harmful in some way?

6. How has the dataset been used? How could it be used?

Examples of Data Repositories

- [Data.gov](https://data.gov)
- [Google Dataset Search](https://www.google.com/datasetsearch/)
- [Kaggle](https://www.kaggle.com/)
- [Data.gov](https://data.gov)
- [Earthdata.nasa.gov](https://earthdata.nasa.gov/)
- [Microsoft Research Open Data](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/open-data/)
- [Reddit Datasets](https://www.reddit.com/datasets/)
- [ICPSR \(Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research\)](https://www.icpsr.org/)
- [World Bank Open Data](https://data.worldbank.org/)
- [World Health Organization Data](https://www.who.int/data/)
- [Dryad](https://www.dryad.org/)



- [Amazon Web Services \(AWS\) Data Exchange](https://aws.amazon.com/data-exchange/)
- [Data.europa.eu](https://data.europa.eu/)
- [Figshare](https://www.figshare.com/)
- [Zenodo](https://zenodo.org/)
- [CU Scholar](https://scholar.cu.edu/)

Dataset Search Tools



- a. [Google Data Search](#)
- b. [Re3data.org](#)
- c. [Open Access Directory's List of Open Repositories](#)
- d. [Nature's List of Scientific Data Repositories](#)
- e. [NIH Guide to Finding Datasets and Repositories](#)

What if you can't find a dataset you need?

- **Advisor, instructor, research team, and subject librarian**
- **Researchers of a related project for data**
 - **You may be asked about your intentions**

Library Resources



Academic Literature: Why Bother?

(Can't AI just find it for me?)



- Find papers from many sources
- What is known/has been done
- Emerging research
- Methods, instruments
- Datasets

Use Citation Management Software!



- [Zotero](#)
- EndNote
- Mendeley
- EasyBib
- RefWorks

For help on citations, contact your librarian or consult Purdue's [OWL \(Online Writing Lab\)](#)

Find databases recommended by
subject librarians:

[Library Guides](#)

DEMO:

Web of Science Database



Google Scholar



- To connect with your library:
 - “Settings”:
 - “Library Links”
 - “Account”
- Do NOT pay for articles!
- If you can’t get full text on GS:
 - get citation and search in your library catalog

The “Good”

- Uses natural language
- Familiar/easy
- Finds much of what databases find
- Can connect to institutional databases to give you access

The “Bad”

- Fewer filters to narrow results
- Not full-text
- Algorithm is unknown
- Pulls from across internet; not all sources are reliable



Disciplinary Databases

- Specific focus
- Limited number of journals they pull from

vs. General Databases

- Contain articles from many disciplines
- Good for broad, interdisciplinary searching

Citation Mining



1. Find a “good” article on your topic
2. Go forward in the research by seeing who has cited it
 - a. (you can find this on Web of Science and Google Scholar)
3. Go backwards in the research by seeing what papers the researchers cited
4. Search the authors of this paper or any of the authors they cite
5. Look at articles in the journal of publication
 - a. In Web of Science, you can see who funded their research and some other information

Interesting Data-Related Websites:

- [StackOverflow](#)
- [Data Colada](#)
[InsideAINews](#)
- [Data Science Central](#)
- [Diversity in Tech: 40 Resources to Promote Equity and Representation for People of Color](#)

Find Books

Please give me feedback in the chat:
(or email me
elizabeth.novosel@colorado.edu)

What topics should I cover in the future?
What was unnecessary for you?

CU Libraries Website: colorado.edu/libraries

University Libraries

Home Research Services Libraries & Collections News & Events Contact Us Hours My Account

OneSearch: Find articles, books and more

Enter Keywords **Search**

A-Z Databases • E-Journals • Interlibrary Loan • Library Catalog • **Advanced Search**

Search is here! Try it using the search box above, and [share your feedback](#)

your research

- Ask a Librarian
- Research Strategies
- Reserve Study Rooms
- Course Reserves
- Research by Subject
- Off-Campus Access

Get VPN here!

Callout boxes:

- Main search bar for library resources. Good for topic searching
- Make appointments, contact your librarian
- Chat with a librarian: help now!
- Find recommended resources in specific subject areas

CU Libraries Website: colorado.edu/libraries

OneSearch searches almost everything we have; not great to look for a **SPECIFIC** book; good if you are searching a topic

The screenshot shows the University Libraries website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Research, Services, Libraries & Collections, News & Events, and Contact Us, along with buttons for Hours and My Account. Below the navigation bar is a large banner image of a mountain landscape. In the center of the banner is a search box titled "OneSearch: Find articles, books and more" with a "Search" button and a link to "Advanced Search". Below the search box is a row of links: "A-Z Databases", "E-Journals", "Interlibrary Loan", "Library Catalog", and "Advanced Search". At the bottom of the page is a section titled "Start your research" with five icons and labels: "Ask a Librarian", "Research Strategies", "Reserve Study Rooms", "Course Reservations", and "Off-Campus Access".

Use "advanced search" for known titles/authors

Use the [catalog](#) for specific book titles, authors, call numbers

OneSearch

University Libraries

My dashboard

- Overview
- Projects
- Saved
- Searches
- Viewed

Research tools

- General search
- Publications
- Concept map
- Supplemental sources

Library Links

- Library Home
- Complete our 2-question survey

Search Tips

geography ⊗ 🔍 MyEBSCO

All filters (2) Online full text Peer reviewed All time ▼ Advanced search

Geography : art, race, exile / Ralph Lemon ; performance text by Tracie Morris ; afterword by Ann Daly.



Subjects: [Geography](#) (Choreographic work : Lemon); [Modern dance](#); [African American dancers -- Biography](#); [Choreographers -- United States -- Biography](#); [Lemon, Ralph -- Diaries](#)

Published in: 2000, Library Catalog

By: [Lemon, Ralph](#)

Status:	Location:	Call number:
Available	Norlin Library - Stacks	GV1785.L45 A3 2000



Access options ▼ View details

Microfiche

Geography [microform] : Concepts, Maps, and Activities. Update: Geography Education Program, No. 9, Fall 1987.

Summary: This issue of Update contains four separate *geography* lesson plans on the topics of: (1) the mobility and interactions of people, goods, and ideas; (2) creating thematic maps and comparing the relative wealth of South...



Subjects: [Elementary Secondary Education](#); [Geographic Concepts](#); [Geography](#); [Geography Instruction](#); [Human Geography](#); [Instructional Materials](#); [+8 more](#)

Published in: 1987, Library Catalog

By: [National Geographic Society \(U.S.\)](#)

Status:	Location:	Call number:
Available	PASCAL Offsite	ED293742



Related resources

Please feel free to contact me:
elizabeth.novosel@colorado.edu

<https://libguides.colorado.edu/findingdatasets/2023>

