Where to Start My Research?

When one embarks on a new study, it pays to look around and see what has already been written on a topic. A review of published secondary literature, articles, and other sources is a great way to jump-start your own project research. Much “leg work” in ferreting out such resources has already been done for you: “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.”(Ecclesiastes 1:9)!

I. Online Catalogs

Obviously, good CLIO and OCLC WorldCat searches are THE places to start! CLIO http://library.columbia.edu/ will quickly lead you to local resources, and offer you links to request materials from other BorrowDirect institutions. Note especially the many “scoping” features available via the left side-hand sidebar. You can narrow your initial search by format, publication date, language, etc.

WorldCat http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?AMS7418 provides you with the “big (bibliographic) picture” on your topic via access to records in holding institutions in the West, as well as some Slavic countries. A WorldCat search is one of the best ways to ensure your research is as comprehensive as possible. As an example, say you were interested in the work of the Soviet-era explorer of Mongolia A.D. Simukov. Type in the keywords “Simukov” and “Mongolia,” and you get the following:
Note that the system indicates whether a particular title is held by Columbia, and a click of “Libraries Worldwide” would indicate other holding institutions.

Both CLIO and WorldCat have great functionality that will save you considerable time. For example, when you come across a title that fits your research perfectly, you can click on the subject heading assigned to that title (or form of personal or organizational name), and you will be given a set of records with that exact same subject heading. So, for example, if you came across a citation to a work on Thracian architecture by Malvina Ruseva:

![Search result for a Thracian architecture dissertation](image)

You could then click on the subject heading: “Tombs—Bulgaria” and pull up all titles in the OCLC database with that same subject heading.

### II. Dissertations

On the subject of bibliography-building (as well as research topic-defining) a vital resource is the Proquest Dissertations and Theses Database [http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?AQP0595](http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?AQP0595). This wonderful resource provides principally FULL-TEXT PDFs of dissertations from institutions of all kinds. This database is very easy to keyword search, and then further refine that search. You get to both read the full-text argument of other scholars on a given topic, AND (most importantly at an early stage of your research), the sources they used,
providing a foundation for your own exploration of the topic at hand and an opportunity to further narrow and refine it.

Here is an example. Say you were interested in studying education of the Roma population in Hungary:

You get over 9,614 results, yet these can be further “scoped down” by using the helpful side bar delimiters such as data of publication, more narrow subject, etc. What you have a full-text, searchable PDFs, with bibliographies and other useful features.

One also has access to the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses for the UK & Ireland http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio7517474

III. Articles and Reviews

Another important tack to take at an early stage of your research is searching various INDEXING databases for articles, reviews, etc. pertaining to your topic. Here are some of the most useful that are focused on our field:
**American Bibliography of Slavic & East European Studies (ABSEES)**

http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio1726373 indexes articles of North American scholarship on East-Central Europe, Russia, and the former Soviet Union, including bibliographic records for journal articles, books and book chapters, book reviews, dissertations, online resources, and selected government publications. As a project dates back to 1956. However, presently records for materials appearing after 1989 are available online—some 135,700 records as of May 2017.


In those cases where Columbia subscribes to electronic full-text databases of articles from specific journals, you can click “e-link” and are taken to a listing of database that actually include the desired article. For example, a search of ABSEES for the terms “Hungarian” and “Fidesz” yields 18 records. If you click on the third one:

![Image of search results]

…you see “elink” on the right side of the page. Click it:
and it takes you to a page where you can click to get the full-text article.
Unfortunately, a dedicated index to articles from Western European scholarship on Eastern Europe, Russia, and the former Soviet Union is no longer active. You may want to consult the European Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies (EBSEES), which was compiled in 1991-2007, and includes materials published in Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

**Slavic Humanities Index** [http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio10258416](http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio10258416) is a useful, relatively new (2013) indexing database that is now becoming a full-text database, offering PDFs of more recently indexed articles. It is an excellent source for article citations (more than 240,000) in twenty-one vernacular languages of Central, Eastern, and South-eastern Europe, including indexed articles from periodicals issued in Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine (a particularly well-represented country).

In the sample search below, note that you can do your initial search either in the original language, or using transliteration. However, within PDFs, you can only right-click to do a
“Find” search in the original alphabet (e.g., Łódź, NOT Lodz). However, one does NOT need to use special truncation symbols to capture words with inflected endings. Right-clinking “find” and putting in “Pils” will find all forms in the document wherever they occur.

As with other databases, you can further limit search results by using the left sidebar, as below.

**Middle Eastern & Central Asian Studies (MECAS)** is another useful indexing database for Middle Eastern and Central Asian studies. It provides a “bibliographic index of research, policy and scholarly discourse on the countries and peoples of the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa.”

Below is a sample search result for articles on minorities in Turkmenistan:
Again, one may further narrow the search via the sidebar on the left of the screen.

Obviously, depending on one’s topic, there are MANY options for general indexing databases—those that are not geographical region-specific—that will prove beneficial to your research. Feel free to contact a Global Studies Librarian—that’s what we are here for!