

Literature searching

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The purpose of this review is to point out some of the fundamental bibliographies and bibliographical databases for Africa studies. In-depth orientation is given, for example, in Kagan *Reference Guide to Africa* (2005), Zell *The African Studies Companion* (2006) and [Bibliographies & Resource Guides in African Studies](#) on the Columbia University Library's website. The quarterly journal *African Book Publishing Record* produces an annual list of recently published bibliographies. The previous edition of this publication, [Studying Africa](#) (2005), includes references to older material.

"Bibliography – a list of literature within a certain subject area or concerning numerous subject areas ... with the task of facilitating access to larger quantities of information to be found on a subject, country, language, etc."

(From, Nationalencyklopedin)

A (bibliographic) database is a compilation of information that is organized into fields and can be searched logically, with dependable results. Databases may be library catalogs, indexes, or bibliographies, ... The common element is organization and reliable searchability.

(Gretchen Walsh, African Studies Library at Boston University)

Bibliographic overviews

Bibliographic overviews can be found in the handbook series *Historical Dictionaries of Africa*. This provides a very good introduction to the literature concerning the respective countries. Recently published editions in the series are *Cameroon* by Rebecca Mbuh (2010), *Democratic Republic of the Congo* by Emizet F. Kisan-gani and F. Scott Bobb (2010) and *Nigeria* by Toyin Falola and Ann Genova (2009). There is an abundance of bibliographies covering the various subject fields. Good current examples of these are given in the previously mentioned Kagan *Reference Guide to Africa* (2005) and Zell *The African Studies Companion* (2006, with continuous updates to be found in the *African Book Publishing Record*). Detailed bibliographies can also be found in many of the monographs dealing with specific countries or subjects.

Current bibliographies

Current bibliographies are those that are issued at regular intervals, e.g. quarterly and sometimes as annual volumes. These collections usually include references

to books and journal articles, and are generally arranged according to countries and subjects. By using this type of bibliography, it is easy to keep up to date with recently published literature. *Africa Bibliography* is published once a year in cooperation with the journal *Africa*. The bibliography is arranged geographically and lists books, documents, journal articles and articles in collected works. It also includes some bibliographic articles relating to special topics. The bibliography will be available on the Internet starting in 2011. *International African Bibliography* includes sections dealing with countries or subjects and lists books, journal articles, and documents. A detailed cumulative index, subdivided into categories such as African languages and ethnic groups, is included. *A Current Bibliography on African Affairs* contains region and subject sections dealing with mainly journal articles. The journal *African Affairs* (3 issues/year) contains a register of recently released African literature. It also provides a list of articles on Africa published in non-Africanist journals. [dok-line AFRIKA](#) is an Internet-based current bibliography produced since 2000 by GIGA Information Centre in Hamburg. Each issue is devoted to a special theme with annotated references in German and English to books, journal articles and free Internet resources.

Literature published in Africa

Literature published in Africa is listed in *African Books in Print*, with a follow-up in the form of the current *African Book Publishing Record*. National bibliographies are current bibliographies listing all literature published in a particular country. At present 36 of Africa's 53 countries have national bibliographies or similar. Some are available online: [Bibliographie du Bénin](#), [National Bibliography of Ethiopia](#) and [Namibia National Bibliography](#). Soon to be available are *Bibliographie de l'Algérie* and *Swaziland National Bibliography*. *South African National Bibliography* (SANB) is a subsidiary database in South Africa's national library catalogue [The National Library of South Africa](#). SANB is also one of the databases in *Africa-Wide Information* (presented below).

Searching for literature on the Internet

Numerous types of databases dealing with literature can be found on the Internet. *Bibliographic databases* or *reference databases* consist of references to books, reports, articles and conference contributions, etc. Information is given under each reference about the item's author, title, publisher and more. Sometimes an abstract is also included. *Full text databases* are sources that provide complete or partial access online to the publication itself, besides giving bibliographic information. *Hybrid databases* are a combined form, where full text links are supplied for some documents while only bibliographical details are provided for others. On the Nordic Africa Institute library's website, there are links that point to the most important [databases](#) and [library catalogues](#).

Africa-specific databases

Only a few literature databases that concentrate on Africa exist. The largest of these by far is produced by NISC (National Inquiry Services Centre) in South Africa. It is called *Africa-Wide Information* and is a typical hybrid database. Here the user is able to search simultaneously in 50 databases sourced from more than 20 special libraries in Africa, Europe and the USA. Amongst its contributors are the Africa Institute in Pretoria, the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, the African Studies Centre in Leiden and the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala. This collective database concentrates on the social sciences and humanities. At present it covers close to 4 million records, some with full text links, to books, news articles, journal articles, grey literature and conference contributions, etc. A list of the databases included is available on [NISC's](#) website. *Africa-Wide Information* is a commercial database for which a subscription is required. In the Nordic countries it is accessible for users at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala University, and the University of Oslo

[Aluka Digital Library](#) is an international, collaborative initiative and consists of two databases, *African Cultural Heritage Sites and Landscapes* and *Struggles for Freedom in Southern Africa*. [Aluka](#) contains scientific resources from and about Africa, ranging from archival documents, images, books, periodicals, reports, personal papers, correspondence, UN documents, oral histories and speeches, and more. Access to full text documents requires a subscription. [Database of African Theses and Dissertations \(DATAD\)](#) is a programme initiated by Association of African Universities and contains citations and abstracts for theses and dissertations completed in African universities. [DATAD](#) includes works from all subject areas in ten leading universities. The database requires a subscription. [Aluka](#) and [DATAD](#) are accessible at the Nordic Africa Institute.

[AfricaBib](#), comprised of two databases, *Africana Periodical Literature Bibliographic Database* and *African Women's Database*, and a detailed bibliography, *Women Travelers, Explorers and Missionaries to Africa 1763–2004*, is freely available on the Internet. [AfricaBib](#) was developed by Davis Bullwinkle, University of Arkansas, and is now produced by the African Studies Centre in Leiden. [International Documentation Network on the Great African Lakes Region](#) is a full text database produced by the Réseau Grands Lacs Africains in Geneva. Its aim is to collect hard-to-find documents that deal with the current situation and the economic, political and social conditions in the region. [National ETD Portal](#) is a repository for South African theses and dissertations in full text.

Library databases

It is also possible to search in individual library catalogues that function as a type of bibliographical database. Besides libraries that specialize in Africa, such as the School of Oriental and African Studies, the Nordic Africa Institute, and the African Studies Centre in Leiden, there are also those that focus on development research. Examples of the latter are the Danish Centre for International Studies

and Human Rights in Copenhagen, the British Library for Development Studies, the library of the IMF/World Bank, the United Nations' library system, and many university libraries with large collections of African literature, especially in the USA. A list of [library catalogues](#) can be found on the Nordic Africa Institute's website.

Subject databases

One category of bibliographic database that cannot be ignored when searching for African literature is the commercial database, which is subject related. A subscription is necessary, although, as a rule, they can be accessed at university libraries and special libraries. They are run by subject experts and are generally of high standard. The emphasis is placed on journal articles and the references are nearly always provided with abstracts. Some examples of these databases are *Sociological Abstracts*, *EconLit* and *ERIC*. Among the subject databases freely available on the Internet are [ERIC/IES](#), which is a free version of *ERIC*, and [Anthropological Index Online](#) (use is permitted for private study only). The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) produces the bibliographic database [Women in Politics, with references](#) to books and journal articles dealing with women's participation in political life. The database has many options for customized searches in the search function. [The Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations \(NDLTD\)](#) provides access to theses and dissertations, mostly in full text. In the search function you may refine your search by subject or year. A list of subject-oriented databases of interest to African studies can be found at the end of this chapter. A selection of [databases](#) is available on the Nordic Africa Institute's website. Sometimes it may be of benefit to do a parallel search in a number of databases since, while many of them overlap regarding subject content, none of them provides complete coverage of its era of focus.

Digital archives and web portals

Open Access publishing means that scholarly research findings are made freely available online, often in an open access repository. Other material besides research results may also be published. Approximately 2% of the open archives are located in Africa, the majority of these in South Africa. There are services that list digital archives, and services that search archives and collect references and links to the publications in their own databases. Large archives have a disadvantage, however, in that Africa-oriented material vanishes easily in the enormous flow of information that exists.

[Connecting Africa](#)

Connecting Africa is a service that provides access to African research information and materials produced in the Netherlands and elsewhere. Digital resources on Africa in about 55 institutional repositories, primarily in the USA and Eu-

rope, are harvested and made searchable. The service is provided by the Africa Studies Centre in Leiden, the Netherlands.

[ilissAfrica](#) – Internet Library sub-Saharan Africa

ilissAfrica is an Internet portal that offers integrated access to relevant scientific literature and digital information resources on sub-Saharan Africa. The database on [Internet resources](#) has a collection of more than 4,300 websites, mostly from Africa. The websites are searchable and browseable according to region, country, organisation and subject area. Under the option [Resource types](#) the portal has good and detailed overviews of various full text resources. The service is provided by the Africa Department at the University Library Johann Christian Senckenberg in Frankfurt, in cooperation with GIGA Information Centre Africa Library in Hamburg.

[OpenDOAR](#) – The Directory of Open Access Repositories

OpenDOAR is a directory of academic open access repositories around the world. The archives are listed geographically and include in-depth information on each repository. To search full text material a search service based on Google is provided. *OpenDOAR* is initiated by the University of Nottingham, England and Lund University.

[OAIster](#)

OAIster is a union catalogue of digital resources and contains links to more than 23 million documents. In the advanced search function, you can search according to subject, year and type of resource. The service is provided by OCLC and University of Michigan.

[DRIVER](#) – Digital Repository Infrastructure Vision for European Research

DRIVER is an Internet portal with European open access repositories, with content across academic disciplines. *DRIVER* provides access to more than 2.5 million scientific documents in 249 repositories from 33 countries. The portal has now also opened up for non-European archives, among them some in South Africa.

[SwePub](#) – Swedish Scientific Publications

SwePub gives unified access to Swedish scientific publications.

Searching for journal articles

References to journal articles can be found in many of the bibliographies and databases already mentioned. However, there are special journal indexes that

exclusively list articles. African Studies Centre in Leiden releases a current publications index. This index has been published since 1968, first with the title *Documentatieblad* and since 1994, as *African Studies Abstracts*. In 2003 it ceased to appear in print and the index now exists as [African Studies Abstracts Online](#), accessible via the centre's website. It covers a large number of journals and collected works. All of the articles are annotated in either English or French. [Africana Periodical Literature Bibliographic Database](#), a shared database in *AfricaBib*, contains some 109 000 references to articles from approximately 521 journals focusing on African studies. Since 1991, the [Quarterly Index of African Periodical Literature](#) from the Library of Congress office in Nairobi has listed articles from more than 300 scholarly journals published in Africa. [AJOL – African Journals OnLine](#) is an online service providing access to African-published research, and increase worldwide knowledge of indigenous scholarship. *AJOL* lists the table of contents of some 400 African-published, peer-reviewed scholarly journals from 29 countries. Some 100 journals contain full text articles that are downloadable. *Index to South African Periodicals* is one of the databases in *Africa-Wide Information* (mentioned previously). Numerous references to journal articles, mainly in full text, can be found in [ilissAfrica](#). More journal indexes are presented on the Nordic Africa Institute's web page [Electronic journals and articles](#), and in the chapter [Periodicals](#).

References

- [AfricaBib](#) Leiden: African Studies Centre
- Africa Bibliography* (annual) Edited by Terry A. Barringer in collaboration with The International African Institute, London. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Africa-Wide Information* Grahamstown: National Inquiry Services Centre
- African Affairs* (3 issues/year). Oxford: Royal African Society.
- The African Book Publishing Record* (4 issues/year) Munich: K.G. Saur
- [African Studies Abstracts Online](#) 2003– Leiden: African Studies Centre.
- [AJOL](#). Grahamstown: AJOL
- A Current Bibliography on African Affairs* (4 issues/year) Farmingdale, NY: Baywood Publ. Co.
- [Bibliographies & Resource Guides in African Studies](#) New York: Columbia University Library
- [dok-line AFRIKA](#) Hamburg: GIGA Information Centre
- International African Bibliography* (4 issues/year) Compiled and edited by David Hall in association with the Library at School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Munich: De Gruyter Saur.
- [International Documentation Network on the Great African Lakes Region](#) Geneva: Réseau Grands Lacs Africains
- Kagan, Alfred (2005) *Reference Guide to Africa. A Bibliography of Sources* London: Scarecrow Press (2nd edition)

- [Quarterly Index of African Periodical Literature](#) Nairobi: Library of Congress.
- Lomer, Cécile (ed.) (2006) *African Books in Print. An Index by Subject, Author and Title*. Munich, K.G. Saur. 2 vol. (6th edition)
- Rylander, Kristina (ed.) (2004) [Att studera Afrika](#) Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet. (New, reworked edition)
- Zell, Hans (2006) *The African Studies Companion: A Guide to Information Sources*. Lochcarron: Hans Zell Publishing Consultants. (4th edition, printed and online)

Subject related databases

These generally require a subscription, but are usually available at public libraries.

Interdisciplinary

PAIS International (Public Affairs Information Service), 1972–

Social anthropology

[Anthropological Index Online](#), 1957– (Freely available for research purposes)

Anthropology Review Database (ARD)

AnthroSource

Theses and Dissertations

Database of African Theses and Dissertations

Dissertations & Theses

[National ETD Portal](#) (Freely available)

[The Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations](#) (Freely available)

Library and information science

LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts), 1969–

Demography

[African Population Database](#), 1960–2000 (Freely available)

[Population Index](#), 1986–2000 (Freely available)

Human ecology

Environmental Sciences, 1967–

[GreenFILE](#) (Freely available)

SCOPUS

Economics

EconLit, 1969–

Geography, geology and related subjects

Geobase, 1980–

History

Historical Abstracts, 1955–

Humanities

Arts and Humanities Citation Index (ISI)

Art, design*Artbibliographies Modern*, 1974–[Bibliography of the History of Art / International Bibliography of Art](#) (Freely available)*DAAI (Design and Applied Arts Index)*, 1973–**Agriculture, rural development***AGRICOLA Articles***Literature, language***Linguistics and Language Behaviour Abstracts*, 1973–*LRC (Literature Resource Center)**MLA Bibliography (Modern Language Association)*, 1925–**Medicine, health, HIV/AIDS***African Healthline* (includes several databases, available via *Africa Wide Information*)*PubMed*, 1950–**Music***International Library of African Music (ILAM)*, 1900– (Available via *Africa Wide Information*)*RILM Abstracts (Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale)*, 1967–**Education, pedagogy***ERIC (Educational Resources Information Centre) (CSA)*, 1966–[ERIC/IES \(Institute of Education Sciences\)](#) (a free version of ERIC/CSA)**Psychology***PsycINFO***Religion***ATLA Religion Database (ATLAS)***Sociology, social work, gender science***ASSI (Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts)*, 1987–*IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences)*, 1951–*Sociological Abstracts*, 1952–*Social Sciences Citation Index (ISI)**Social Services Abstracts*, 1979–[Women in politics](#) (Freely available)**Political science***Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO)**Worldwide Political Science Abstracts*, 1975–**Internet resources***AfricaBib* – <http://www.africabib.org>*African Population Database* –http://na.unep.net/siouxfalls/globalpop/africa/Africa_index.html

- African Studies Abstracts Online* – <http://www.ascleiden.nl/Library/Abstracts/ASA-Online>
- AJOL* – <http://www.ajol.info>
- Aluka Digital Library* – <http://www.aluka.org/>
- Anthropological Index Online* – <http://aio.anthropology.org.uk/aiosearch/>
- Att studera Afrika* – <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:nai:diva-112>
- Bibliographie du Bénin* – <http://bnb.bj/spip.php?rubrique7>
- Bibliographies & Resource Guides in African Studies* - <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/africa/cuwl/BIBS.html>
- Bibliography of the History of Art / International Bibliography of Art* – <http://library.getty.edu/bha>
- Connecting Africa* – <http://www.connecting-africa.net/>
- dok-line AFRIKA* – <http://www.giga-hamburg.de/index.php?file=bibliographien.html&folder=bibliothek#af>
- DRIVER* – <http://search.driver.research-infrastructures.eu>
- ERIC/IES* – <http://www.eric.ed.gov>
- GreenFILE* – <http://www.greeninfoonline.com>
- A Guide to Africa on the Internet* – <http://www.nai.uu.se/library/resources/guidetoafrica/>
- ilissAfrica* – <http://www.ilissafrika.de/en>
- International Documentation Network on the Great African Lakes Region* – <http://www.grandslacs.net/home.html>
- Namibia National Bibliography* – <http://www.wisis.unam.na/www.wisis//NNB.01/form.htm>
- National Bibliography of Ethiopia* – http://www.nale.gov.et/national_bibliography_of_ethiopia.htm
- National ETD Portal* – <http://www.netd.ac.za>
- The National Library of South Africa* – <http://natlib1.sabinet.co.za/search-S2>
- The Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations* – <http://www.ndltd.org/serviceproviders/scirus-etd-search>
- Nordic Africa Institute* – <http://www.nai.uu.se>
- OAIster* – <http://www.oclc.org/oaister>
- OpenDOAR* – <http://www.opendoar.org/>
- Population Index* – <http://popindex.princeton.edu/>
- Quarterly Index of African Periodical Literature* – <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/misc/qshtml/qsihome.html>
- SwePub* – <http://swepub.kb.se>
- Women in Politics* – <http://www.ipu.org/bdf-e/BDFsearch.asp>