Intro to Google Books

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Nashua Public Library
Covered in this class:

- Searching Google Books
- Searching within a book
- Understanding the access levels
- Downloading a book
- Saving a book to My Library
- Creating citations
- Advanced search
- Ngram viewer

What is Google Books?

In 2004, Google launched an ambitious project to digitize as many of the world’s books as possible. Digitizing means scanning each page of a book and using OCR (Optical Character Recognition) to convert the pictures of the text into actual text that can be searched. As of 2019, Google said it had scanned more than 40 million titles (out of an estimated 130 million in existence).

Google Books is the website where you can search within these books. However, while Google may have digitized 40 million books, they do not have permission under copyright laws to display them all in their entirety. Copyright law is complex and has changed over the years, but, generally speaking, anything earlier than 1925 is in the public domain in the US.

Access Levels

How available a book is to the public depends on whether Google has scanned it and what it has permission to display.

**Full View** – You can see the entire book and even download it if you like.

**Preview** – Certain pages can be viewed, but typically only a small percentage of the entire book.

**Snippet View** – When you perform a search, it will display a sentence or so surrounding your search term. Even if the term appears on a page not available in the Preview, you’ll still see the Snippet.

**No Preview** – Google hasn’t scanned this book. It will only show information about the book.
Getting Started

To get started with Google Books, you can just perform a regular Google search, then click More, then Books.

Alternatively, you can type books.google.com into your address bar.

Filter and Sort

You can filter and sort your results using the menu under the search bar. If it’s not displaying automatically, click Tools.

Any books – Search all the books in Google Books.

Preview available – Only search books that have some pages available in a Preview.

Google eBooks – Only search books where the full text is available, though you may have to buy it from Google.

Free Google eBooks – Only search books where the full text is available for free.

Any document, Books, Magazines, or Newspapers. Google Books is primarily books. They only have a handful of magazines and some newspapers, but you can limit your search by them if you want.

Any time, 21st century, 20th century, 19th century, Custom range… This may be the first time you’ve seen a time filter separated by centuries! You can also select Custom range… and put in whatever dates you want.

Sorted by relevance or Sorted by date. Unfortunately Sorted by date sorts it with the most recent on top with no option to reverse so the oldest is on top.

Clear shows up as an option after you’ve clicked in any of the filters. You can Clear your settings back to the default, which is to search everything and sort by relevance.
Results

When you’ve done a search, your results will look something like this:

As you can see, there will be a picture of the cover or of the title page. You’ll also see the title, the author/editor, and the publication date.

In this example, Good Night New Hampshire has a Preview available. Some of the pages will be available for you to view. The History of the Town of Hampton, New Hampshire... says Read, which means you can view the entire text. However, the Found Inside note says some of it may be missing.

Clicking More editions will display a list of other editions, such as paperback, a reprinting, or a translation, etc.
Viewing a Book

In the list of results, click on either the book cover or the book title to view it. It will open with your search results within the book as an overlay over the record of the book. It looks something like this:

In this example, it found “hampton” or “new hampshire” 85 times. It will highlight those words in the text. Along the right side, it shows where each search term appears in the course of the book. At the top, if you click Next, it will take you to the next place one of those terms appears. Click Previous to go back. Clicking View all changes the view to show you short snippets. It looks something like this:
If it’s a book that only has a Preview available, you can click View all to see where all the search terms appear, even if they’re on pages that aren’t available in the Preview.

Though it seems to say your results are sorted in Order by relevance, they’re actually sorted Order by pages when you first open it up. You can click on that pulldown and select relevance to get it to actually sort by relevance.

Click Clear search and it will show you the entire book with no highlights if it’s a Full View book.

There is also a row of tools at the top.

Use the first drop-down to jump to different chapters or sections in the book.

In the next box, you can change your search terms and perform a new search within the book.

The arrow buttons go back or forward a page, respectively.

The magnifying glasses let you increase or decrease magnification.

The next three icons control how many pages you see on the screen at once. One page, 2 pages side-by-side, or a thumbnail view of as many pages as will display on your screen.
The vertical ellipsis is **More** options:

- **Share** the book and it will give you a link to copy and paste.
- **Embed** gives you the code to embed it into a page on your website.
- **Download this book** as either PDF or EPUB format.
- **Share a clip** allows you select a section of the text and copy it either as text, an image, or embed code. You can also ask Google Translate to translate the text into another language.
- **Find in a library** will take you to WorldCat, the world-wide database of libraries and their holdings. Note: If you just click it, it will open in the same page. If you’d like to keep the book open in a tab and open WorldCat in a new tab, then right-click on **Find in a library** and choose **Open in a new tab**.
- **Help** takes you to the Google Books help section.
- **Terms of Service** is the Google Books Terms of Service.
- **Copyright information** jumps you to the book’s copyright page.

**Viewing the Book’s Record**

If you want to know more about the book itself, you have to close the search results overlay. Click the X in the upper right corner.

Now it will look something like this:
As you scroll down, there is even more information not shown in this screenshot. The types and quantity of information available on this page will vary by book. Newer works by more popular authors will generally have more information than older works with small print runs.

Under the title and subtitle is the author and publication date. Below that is a row of buttons.

Read for Free will open up the overlay again so you can read it in your browser.

Download PDF will give you a PDF version. Note: There’s no EPUB option from this page.

Search inside likewise will open up the overlay we saw before and you can do another search.

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Overview

The overview tab shows a lot of information about the book.

Under About this edition, any or all of this information may appear:

The publisher, ISBN, page count, publication date, and language. There will probably also be a summary and sometimes even a snippet from Wikipedia.

You can click the Create citation button to copy the citation in APA, MLA, or Chicago style.

Clicking Table of contents will open the book up again and take you to the Table of Contents page.

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Below that is **Author** which might have a short biography of the author and will have a link to quickly do a Google search on that author's name.

And below that is **More by author** like the More by author tab at the top.
Advanced Search

If you want more detailed control of your search, there is an Advanced Search option that's a bit hidden. When you're looking at a book record, up at the top in your search bar is Advanced Search. Or you can go there directly at https://books.google.com/advanced_book_search?hl=en

Rather than using a fuzzy keyword search to try find books by a certain publisher or on a particular subject, you can use the advanced search in those specific fields.

Ngram Viewer

One use that Google has made of its collection of so many digitized books is the Ngram Viewer. You can use it to spot trends in language usage from 1500 to last year.

Go to https://books.google.com/ngrams to get started. It gives you a sample search to start with. For instance, you might compare how many times Dracula is mentioned versus Frankenstein by searching “Frankenstein, Dracula”.

Or search a word like “groovy” to see when it started being used in print.
Other Resources

Use the new Google Books - https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/9523832
