

# ATLA Religion Database

## A Guide to Using the ATLA Religion Database on FirstSearch

The ATLA Religion Database is a religious and theological literature index produced by the American Theological Library Association. This web version via FirstSearch contains citations to journal articles and book reviews from 1949 to the present and essays in books from 1960 to the present. Some citations contain links to the full text of selected journal articles. See citations with hyperlink "[Go To Remote Full Text \(ATLA\)](#)"

### Stage One – Preliminary Search

At this stage, the goal is to capture a few relevant citations based on a group of “key” words or phrases taken from a prospective topic sentence, advisor suggestion, prior reading, or simply a hunch.

For example, the following terms might yield good results in research for a paper on aspects of developing new congregations:

**develop\* / new / mission / congregation\***

(NOTE: The \* is a device meant to retrieve all variations of a word such as developing, developer, development, etc. Another truncation symbol commonly used in many databases is a ?)

Enter search terms in the **Search For:** boxes in the Advanced Search screen (the default)

ATLA Religion Advanced Search

• Enter search terms in one or more boxes and click on Search.

Home Databases Searching Results

Basic Search Advanced Search Expert Search Previous Searches Go to page

News Help Current database: ATLA Religion

Search Clear

Search in database: ATLA Religion (Updated: 2003-08-15)  
Religious and theological literature for students and faculty

Search for: develop\* Keyword  
and new Keyword  
and congregation\* Keyword

Year (format: YYYY-YYYY)  
Language No Limit  
Limit to: Document Type No Limit  
Record Stream No Limit  
Product Code No Limit

Limit to:  Full text  
 Subscriptions held by my library (LNT, LUTHER SEMINARY LIBR)

Limit availability to: match any of the following  
Library Code Find codes...

Rank by: Date  
No ranking  
Relevance  
Date clear

The relationship between the terms is automatically set to **and** meaning each must be present somewhere in the citation.

Change the relationship by clicking the down arrow and choosing a different operator:

**Or** = either one **or** the other term(s) must be present

**Not** = the first term must be present, but the following term(s) must **not** be present

Also shown, a sometimes helpful option is to set the **Rank by:** box to **Date** guaranteeing that the most recently published items will appear first in the search results.

Click the **Search** box to launch the search.

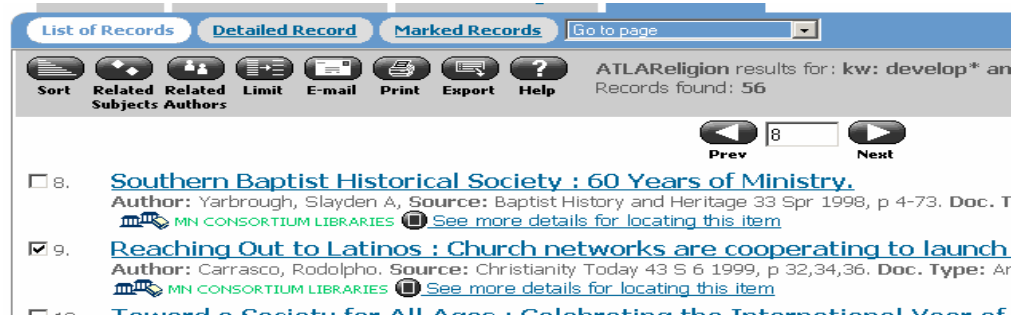
Examine the results. If no citations are returned, try eliminating one or more terms, use related words, or ask a library staff member for advice.

## Stage Two – Making a Search More Precise

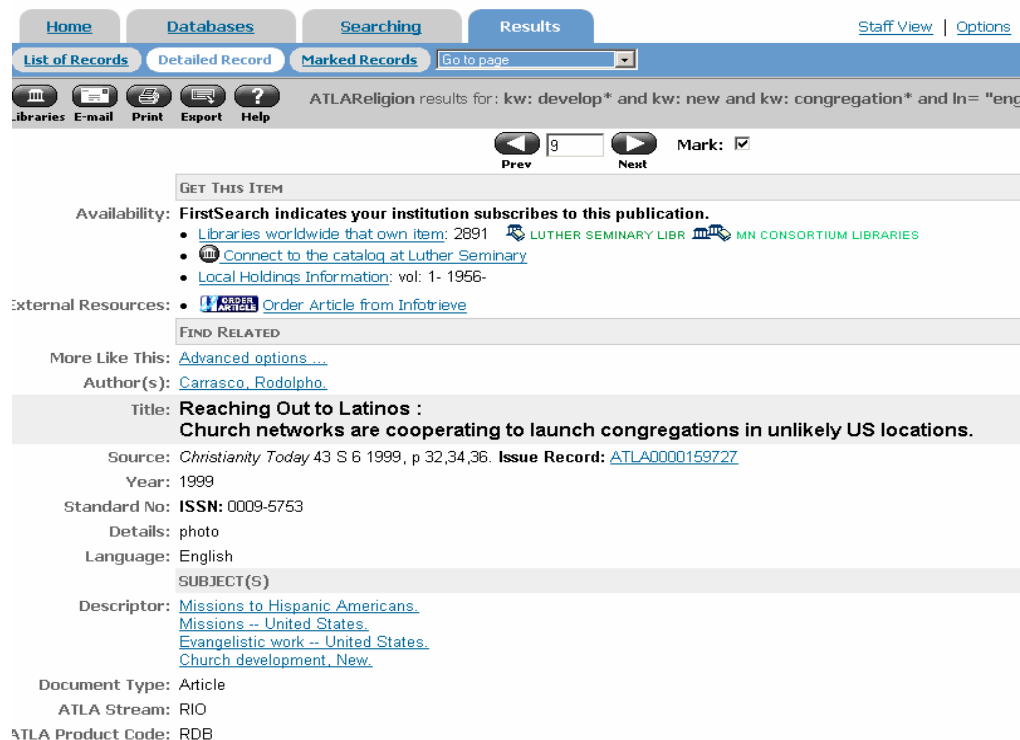
The objective at this stage is to identify any citations which contain subject headings that seem particularly relevant and to use them in subsequent modifications of the search.

Subject headings are assigned by indexers as a means of grouping together books, articles, essays, etc. on the same topic regardless of the vocabulary used by the titles of the items, thus making searching by subject heading the most efficient method by reducing the need to think of a variety of combinations of keywords.

Review the results of the initial keyword search, selecting one or more relevant citations



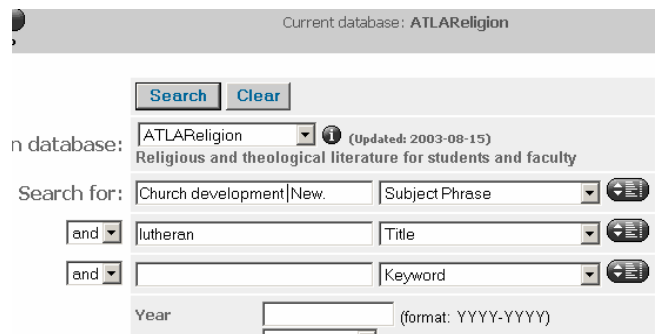
From the navigation column on the top of the screen, click on *Marked Records* to retain only those records selected. Then click on *Detailed Record* to view the complete citation along with descriptors (subject headings.)



The subject heading "Church Development, New" seems to be a good choice to uncover additional citations not captured by the initial keyword search. To redirect the search using this heading, simply click on this hyperlinked heading.

## Stage Three – Further Search Refinements

At this stage, the search could be refined by using a combination of subject headings and keywords. For instance, if the goal was to find information on developing new churches specifically within a Lutheran context, the keyword “Lutheran” could be added to the search.



Current database: ATLA Religion

Search [Clear]

Current database: ATLA Religion (Updated: 2003-08-15)  
Religious and theological literature for students and faculty

Search for: Church development|New. Subject Phrase

end lutheran Title

end Keyword

Year (format: YYYY-YYYY)

In this example, “Lutheran” is searched as a keyword in the Title field only, since a term in a title is more likely to accurately reflect content.

The subject heading is known, so Subject Phrase is used, much like a Title Phrase search where an entire title is known.

Combinations of known search elements, (e.g. author name, series title, subject heading, source or journal title) combined with keyword terms can be very effective in yielding good search results.

## Finding the Source - The Structure of Database Records

The nature of the citation will determine the method used to locate the item. The ATLA Religion Database contains records for citations to **journal articles, essays, reviews, and books which have been reviewed**. A link to the **full text** of articles is available for select journal titles via ATLA(S), the ATLA Serials database of scanned articles.

### Journal Article

Journal articles are indicated by the designation **Doc. Type: article** in the brief display. The line labeled **Source:** provides the title of the journal in which the article appears. Find the journal title and call # in the library’s catalog, MARTIN, or the *Consortium Periodicals List* located in various places in the library.

### Essay

Essays are single works which have been published as one of a collection of essays under a general editor. Identified by **Doc. Type: essay**. The title of the book in which the essay appears follows after **Source**. Find this book (not essay) title in MARTIN

### Book Review and Book

**Doc. Type: Review** and **Book Reviewed** respectively. In the review citation, **Source** indicates the journal in which the book review can be found.

### Full Text

The presence of a link to a scanned image of the full text of a journal article is indicated in the line

**Full Text:**  [Go to Remote Full Text \(ATLA\)](#)

## Print, Save, or Email Records

Click on the icons at the top of the search results or detailed records screen.



Follow the on screen instructions. When records are selected from a list of results, to print choose *Marked Records* from the navigation column to eliminate those records not selected.

## Searching By Scripture Passage

The ability to search for articles or essays written about a specific passage of Scripture is a handy feature of the ATLA Religion Database.

To search:

- 1) Choose the "Scripture Citation Phrase" index from the drop down menu
- 2) Type the book, chapter, and first verse of the passage, using spaces but without punctuation

### Browse Index

- Enter a term, choose an index, and click on **Browse**
- Click on a term to copy it to your search screen.

Term/Phrase	Count
<a href="#">romans 8 3,4</a>	1
<a href="#">romans 8 3,9-11</a>	1
<a href="#">romans 8 3-4</a>	2
<a href="#">romans 8 30</a>	1
<a href="#">romans 8 31</a>	2
<a href="#">romans 8 31-34</a>	1
<a href="#">romans 8 31-39</a>	13
<a href="#">romans 8 32</a>	6
<a href="#">romans 8 33-34</a>	1
<a href="#">romans 8 34</a>	1

3) Next, click the browse icon  to pull up the index of Scripture passages showing the full range of ways the passage has been entered in the database

4) Click on a passage to automatically transfer it back to the search screen OR, if a broader range of verses is desired, return to the search screen and truncate the passage, e. g. **Romans 8 31\*** Then click the Search button

Note:

When searching for citations on an entire chapter or a single verse, by-pass the browse function and simply enclose the passage in quotes, e.g.


"john 3"  
"john 3 16"

One caveat when searching by Scripture passage—

Indexing by book, chapter, verse is only available back to 1986. Thus, Scripture citation searches will not find articles or essays from before 1986.

## Limiting Searches

When faced with a large number of records retrieved from an initial search, placing limits upon the search may significantly reduce the records needing to be browsed.

The Limit icon  is located on the top of the search results screen.

The example to the left shows how a search with a large result can quickly be limited to only English language records.

Search limits can be set up from the initial search screen as well. See the **Limit to:** and **Limit availability to:** sections. The latter includes a means to limit search results to only citations which contain a link to the full-text of the article.