Hello, and welcome to the Evans Library Conducting Research series. In this module, we will discuss the importance of examining and understanding the scope of information resources.
Examining the scope of information resources helps you to match your information need to the information resources that are the most useful.

Both information needs and information resources have a scope.
Four components of scope

1. Subject
2. Time frame
3. Type of material indexed
4. Information provided

The four components of scope are subject, time frame, type of material indexed, and information that is provided about the indexed material.

Let’s examine each component.
The first component of scope is the subject, or discipline.

Your thesis statement or paper topic will tell you the subject of your information need.

The next step is to examine the subjects covered in the databases and other information resources available to you. Does the database cover all topics, or just a few specific topics?
Read the description of the available resources to find out what subjects are covered, and then choose one that matches the subject of your information need.

For example, if your research topic is the properties of building materials, you will want to choose an engineering database, rather than a database that covers literary criticism or history.
Most online resources have an About link...
...which will help you determine what subjects are covered.
The second component of scope is time frame.

A paper about the life of Abraham Lincoln requires historical documents. But you probably need the most current scientific research for a paper about nanotechnology.

Each information resource contains items within a specific date range.
You can find date range information by reading the general information or the About page for most databases.

It's important to match the time period you need, to the time period covered by the resource you plan to use. You won’t find historical information in a resource that only covers the last five years.
3. Type of material

The third component of scope is the type of material indexed in the available resources. Types of material include scholarly and non-scholarly journal articles, books, patents, technical reports, reference sources, dissertations, newspapers, websites, and many more.

What are you looking for? What is covered by the databases available?
The About page of most resources will tell you
the type of materials that you can find within them.
Match your need to what is available!
The fourth, and last, component of scope is the information provided about the material.

Do you need full-text items that you can read on your computer right now? Is your library nearby, so that you can check out books? Do you have time to request the items that you need from the Library’s Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery service?

Every database includes bibliographic citations and many also include abstracts, or summaries, of the indexed items.

Often, though, databases will contain the full-text of articles, or links to the full-text in another resource.
You can find out what information is provided about the materials indexed in a database on the About page, or within the database itself.

This particular database contains citations, abstracts, and full-text!
We hope that this session has been helpful to you. Please remember to ask a librarian for help with examining the scope of information resources.