A Guide to Primo

Primo is a search tool. It is not a database in its own right. It merely has the ability to search multiple databases and catalogs at once. What’s particularly wonderful about it is that it can search the online and physical collections of all of the following libraries:

- Carroll College
- Chief Dull Knife College
- Dawson Community College
- Great Falls College (MSU)
- Helena College
- Highlands College
- Little Big Horn College
- Missoula College
- Montana Tech
- MSU Billings
- MSU Bozeman
- MSU Northern
- Rocky Mountain College
- St. Patrick Hospital
- Salish Kootenai College
- UM Law
- UM Missoula
- UM Western
- University of Great Falls

That’s the bulk of the college and university libraries in the state of Montana!

This guide will cover the following information about Primo:

- Accessing Primo
- Simple Searching
- Searching the Catalog
- Filtering/Narrowing Results
- Journal Titles
- Interlibrary Loan

Please note, specific search terms and numbers used in these examples may change over time within Primo.

If you need further assistance, contact the Rocky Library at 406-657-1087 or ill@rocky.edu.

Accessing Primo

To access Primo, simply click on the link on the library homepage; it will open Primo in a new window.
If you’re off campus you can still use Primo; when it comes time to view an article you’ll simply be prompted to log in with your Rocky username (the part of your email address before @rocky.edu) and password (the same one you use for your email).

Simple Searching

Clicking on Primo sends you right to this screen:

This is your simple search screen. If you want to cast the widest net possible in your research, this is the place to start. You have 3 options of what to search here—Rocky Mountain College, which searches everything that Rocky has access to, virtually or physically, except some of our EBSCOhost subscriptions; Montana Academic Libraries, which searches everything that all of the libraries listed above have access to in addition to what Rocky has; and EBSCO, which searches all of the journals available through EBSCOhost. We recommend that you start by searching Rocky Mountain College and only search the other two if you can’t find enough materials there.

For example, let’s say you’re writing a paper on the history of tattooing. If you type “tattoos” into the search box and use the default search of Rocky Mountain College, you get the following 1,413 results, which includes both an online reference entry and a print book that you can find in the library:
If you do the same search and select “Montana Academic Libraries,” you get the following results:

That’s 1,548 online and physical results across all the participating libraries in Montana. As you can see, the second result is a book at University of Montana Missoula, which you can request through inter-library loan if you’re interested in reading it. We’ll come back to inter-library loan in a bit.

If you use the same search term but search EBSCO, you get 260,285 results, all of which are journal articles:

That’s a lot more results to go through, which is why we recommend holding off on searching EBSCO unless you have to. Many – though not nearly all – results from EBSCO will also show up when searching Rocky Mountain College.

**Searching the Catalog**

Our simple search for tattoos in Rocky Mountain College provided many kinds of results, including results from the library’s catalog, the physical items that are available in the library: books, dvds, and so on. The second result listed is a book, Tattoo: Bodies, Art, and Exchange in the Pacific and the West, which you can tell is a book both by the book icon to the left and by the yellow dot underneath the title and author that says Check holdings at Rocky Mountain College Stacks. The call number, which is the
books ‘address’ in the library, is provided in the result listing, but if you click on Locations, you will get a link to the catalog that will tell you if the book is actually available on the shelf or if someone has it checked out. The Details tab provides some more information about the book, but you’ll get better information if you view the catalog record via the Locations tab. The More tab for books is not very useful, and you’ll probably never need it.

If you just want to search for books, and not for journal articles (or for video recordings or audio recordings) you can refine your search by type, either on the left hand side after your search (in this case, the option to refine to just books is hidden under ‘More options’)...

...or through the advanced search options before your search:
You can also search Rocky’s ebook collection this way. If you need help using the catalog or finding a book in the library, take a look at the guides for using the catalog and finding books in the library, or come ask for help – we’re always happy to help!

**Filtering/Narrowing Results**

If you’re looking for journal articles, after doing a simple search you will need to narrow down your results. You have better things to do with your time than to slog through 1,415 results with “tattoos” somewhere in their text, which is what you get with a simple search – it searches every word in the article and article information, so if the author’s name happens to be John Tattoo, you’ll get that article too, even if it has nothing to do with body art. You can choose to search just the title, author, or subjects in Advanced Search.

To narrow down your results, you need to focus on the left side of your results page

You’ll see here lots of ways to refine your search. Most of them, particularly the ones further down the screen, you’ll never need to use, but some of them can be helpful; for instance if you’re searching on a topic that you want really recent research on, you can limit the creation date to only things published since 2000, or 2010, or whenever.

One of the easiest and most useful ways you can narrow your results is to choose only peer-reviewed journals:

You’ll probably want to do this with almost all of your searches; professors usually require that you use only peer-reviewed – or scholarly – research in your papers. What that means is that the article was written by an expert and then reviewed by other experts in the field for quality and accuracy before it was allowed to be published, rather than being written by a journalist with little background knowledge and published with only the scrutiny of the editor. As you can see, of the 1400 articles retrieved with the simple search, only 383 are of a scholarly quality.
Let’s take a look at our results page.

On the far left hand side you see the Article icon; if the result were a book or a video or some other format, you would see a corresponding icon. On the far right hand side you see “View all versions;” if the same article (from the same journal) is available through multiple databases, you can select which database you want to view it in here – it’s really probably something you’ll never need, unless you get an error message from the default database. At the top, you’ll notice Sorted by: Relevance; this is the default option but you can also sort by date, popularity, author, and title.

In the middle you can see details of your results – title, author, citation (journal, date, pages), highlighted keywords, and a green dot saying Full text available. If the full text isn’t available, you’ll see a grey dot saying No full text. You’ll mostly only see this if you select Expand My Results in the filters on the left side of the screen, which will give you results that Rocky doesn’t have access to but that you can request through inter-library loan. You also have three options at the bottom of each result: View Online, Details, and More.
Clicking View Online:

will open the article in the frame on the Primo website; you can also view it in the full screen by clicking the article title in the results or by clicking ‘Open source in a new window’ right underneath View Online. This is when you will be asked for your Rocky credentials if you’re off campus and the resource is something Rocky pays for. Sometimes these links, instead of taking you directly to the article, will take you to a list of results with the article among them, which you will then have to click again; occasionally it will take you to a new search screen where you will need to enter the title of the article you are looking for, search, and then select the article.

The Details tab provides a bit more information than just the citation and a few related links, but you’ll rarely need to delve into this area, unless you’re interested in searching for more articles on the same subject, which you can do by clicking on the subjects listed here.

The More tab provides more search options that you’ll probably never need, except for one: the abstract. Many articles will provide the abstract in front of the article when you View Online, but if they don’t, as in the case of this particular article, you may want to see if it’s available in the More tab, as it is in this case. The abstract is a very important part of your research: it’s a summary of the article, which
you can read to decide if you want to spend time reading the entire article. This can be a huge time-saver; imagine the difference between reading five ten-page articles only to find out none of them help you versus reading five paragraph-long summaries that tell you the articles won’t help!

Interlibrary Loan

If you find a resource you need and it’s not within the Rocky library collection, you may have to request it through interlibrary loan. Take this result, for instance:

By opening up the Locations tab, you can see that the only library in the Montana Academic Libraries group that has this book is the Mansfield Library at the University of Montana in Missoula. Knowing this, you can scroll back up to the top of the page and click on “Interlibrary Loan.”
This takes you to the Interlibrary Loan Form page, which you can also get to directly from the library home page:

![Interlibrary Loan Form page](https://example.com/interlibrary-loan-form)

Simply fill in your information and the information about the book you want and click submit; Rocky staff will contact the Mansfield Library and order the book for you. You can do this for any book or article you want that Rocky doesn’t have, even if you found out about it somewhere other than Primo. We can get material from libraries all over the world!

Primo can be a very useful search tool. If you need further help with it, you can go to the Primo Help tab, email the library at ill@rocky.edu, or call the library at 406-657-1087.

Happy Researching!