

Searching the Online Catalog (OPAC)

Online Resources at Hartford Seminary Library: the Card Catalog

Did you know that the Library's card catalog no longer has any cards? We now call it 'OPAC', short for Online Public Access Catalog. This means that wherever you are on the planet, if you have internet access, you can browse the Library catalog. There is no need for passwords. If you can get to the Library homepage, you can see what is available to any Library patron.

You can find our homepage from the Seminary's homepage, www.hartsem.edu. On the left hand side you'll see a series of buttons: the third one below 'Home' is 'Library.' When you click on that, you will automatically be transferred to the Library's homepage.

While you might be tempted to click on 'Books' from the Library homepage, that will introduce an intermediate step to get to our own Library's catalog. For that, check farther down the list of buttons on the left hand side till you find 'Library Catalog.' Clicking on that will get you directly into 'Browse' searching.

'Browse' searching has a single box for entering information. The type of information is controlled via a pull down menu which gives a number of options, including Title, Author, Subject, and so on. The single box, you will note, suggests that the information you enter will 'begin with' whatever you put in the box. So, entering a subtitle of a book which the Library may own will not yield any results, since no book title 'begins with' its subtitle.

So if you're not completely clear on information specifics, it might be more useful to use 'Power Search'. This feature allows entry of information in three search boxes instead of just one. It also doesn't have a 'begins with' feature, which allows the searcher to enter a subtitle, or even just a single word from a title.

Let's see how 'Power Search' might work.

Click on the 'Power Search' button towards the bottom of the 'Browse' page. This will take you to a three-box search engine which might look familiar to those who have dealt with Journal Article searches from the Seminary Library's collection of EBSCO databases. Such searches are dealt with in another online tutorial.

If you are looking for a treatment of spirituals by the liberation theologian James Cone, you might enter 'Cone' in the first box and select 'Author' from the pull-down menu; then enter 'spirituals' in the next search box while selecting 'subject' (or just leave 'Words') from the corresponding pull-down

menu. The search engine yields a single result: The Spirituals and the Blues: an interpretation.

Besides showing you that the Library carries this particular book, there is more information from the result: Call Number gives the location of the book in the stacks, using the Library of Congress classification system. Please ask a librarian for assistance in finding the book in the stacks if necessary. The result also shows that the book is found in the Main stacks, which means it's out on the open shelves rather than being locked in the Archives or in a Special Collection. (Should you need an archival or special collection item, a librarian will be happy to access the item for you).

The next piece of information is quite important: 'Status' lets you know if the book is on the shelf, or if another patron has already checked the book out. If you like, you may speak to the Circulation Librarian about placing a 'hold' on an item that has yet to be returned. That way, when the book is checked back in, you will be automatically notified as to its availability; it will be held for you to prevent another patron from checking it out before you.