Hi. This is Pam Sukalski, Librarian at SMSU’s McFarland Library. In this video clip we will be searching for books, videos, eBooks, and more in SMSU’s library using MnPALS, the online catalog.

On the SMSU Library homepage, you see the search box in the middle of the page under the Books tab; this box will search for materials in the SMSU library. You can also get to the online catalog by using the Catalog option in the left-hand column. The default is to search in All Fields which is the most frequent search. If you were looking for a specific title or author, you could choose those options from the dropdown menu.

For my example I am going to use the search strategy educational leadership and will use the All Fields search option. When my results are returned, I can see there are 314 items that match my search. Note that your results are returned in Relevance order. This means the item that most closely matched your search terms is put at the top of your results. Many times in the catalog, you will want to see the most recent item published. To do that, you’ll want to change the Sort by option to date. This will bring the newest items to the top.

As I look at the results screen I can see ways to narrow my search off to the left. I always recommend looking through the topics to get ideas for other terms to use in your searches. You can also see the breakdown by date range. If you click on one of the date ranges, you will only see results that fall between those dates. There are a few exceptions to this, as many periodical records do not have a single date in them, so they will display in every date range. This is a bit deceptive, but once you recognize they are magazines and journals, it makes sense. You can also narrow by format. Take note of all the different types of materials that are found in the catalog. This really includes all the types of materials that are housed in the library and some internet resources, excluding articles; you will not find any articles in the MnPALS catalog. You will find periodicals (that’s magazines and journals), but not the articles themselves. The Collection limiter ties directly to the Format of the materials. Take a look at the remaining ways to refine your search.

In this first page of results I can see examples of journals (both in microfilm and in print), books, and eBooks. If I explode the format options in the left-hand column, I’ll see additional formats that are in my results list such as Government Publications and DVDs.

I’m going to sort my results by date now and look for a recent book on this topic. If I want to find this book on the shelves, I need to write down the call number and take note of which collection the item is in. I will also want to note if the item is available or not.

If you are an off-campus student and need to borrow materials, please see the Interlibrary Loan page, specifically the Document Delivery section.

If I use the format option in the left to only look at eBooks, I will see the location is SMSU Library E-books, a call number, and then a link to Online Access. You can click on that to get to the full-text of the book. If you are off-campus, you will be prompted to login with your 14-digit barcode number and password (typically your last name).

If you have any questions about searching in MnPALS, please contact a Librarian.

Searching MnPALS – SMSU
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