Help Using TOPCAT, the SWITCH Online Catalog

Connect: [http://topcat.switchinc.org](http://topcat.switchinc.org)
TOPCAT tutorial: [http://caspian.switchinc.org/~tutorials/](http://caspian.switchinc.org/~tutorials/)

**WHAT IS TOPCAT?**

TOPCAT (the online public catalog) tell you what items (books, journals, videos, audiocassettes, etc.) are held or available from all the SWITCH libraries (Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch University, Concordia University Wisconsin, Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design, Mount Mary College, Sacred Heart School of Theology, Saint Francis Seminary and Wisconsin Lutheran College).

Each record in TOPCAT contains LOCATION information (which library owns the item), CALL NUMBER(S), and the item’s STATUS which indicates whether or not it’s AVAILABLE to be checked out. So long as an item is marked ‘available’ you may check it out or request it from a SWITCH library.

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**Search for Library Materials**

Search for all types of library items owned by the SWITCH libraries using keyword, subject, title, author, journal title or author/title searches.

**Search for Course Reserve Materials**

Perform a search for reserve items by a professor’s last name or by course number. Or, search for materials by call number.

**Search in Other Resources**

From here, link to online databases by school, other area catalogs, SWITCH library information, your patron record, a web tutorial on TOPCAT or a list of newly-acquired items in TOPCAT.

If you locate an item, including journal articles, from a SWITCH library other than your home library, you may REQUEST it from TOPCAT by using the REQUEST button found at the top of each screen.

Books are sent at no charge; journal articles cost 15 cents per page.

**Monday-Friday delivery:** YEAR-ROUND, All libraries

**Saturday delivery:** LATE AUG.-EARLY MAY at AC, CSU, CUW, MMC, SFS, and WLC.
SEARCHING TOPCAT

There are many ways to search TOPCAT to find the items you need. What search you choose often depends on HOW MUCH INFORMATION you have when you begin to search (e.g., you already know the author’s name so you perform an AUTHOR search).

Author

- Use when you know the last name of the creator of a work
- Authors include a person, corporation, government department, or organization. Artists, composers and directors are authors!
- Enter in the LAST NAME first. Spelling counts!

EXAMPLE: morrison, toni

Title

- Use when you know the title of a work or the first words of the title
- Leave off initial articles (a, an, the, del, la, le)

EXAMPLE: raisin in the sun

Keyword

- Use to search for items on a topic using TERMS or PHRASES
- Use when you know PART of a title or when you don’t know an exact subject heading
- TOPCAT looks in authors, titles, subjects and content notes to try & match up your term(s) or phrase
- Allows for adjacency, truncation, operators, proximity or field searches.

EXAMPLES: monetary donations

Subject

- Use to search for items on a topic when you know the correct subject heading
- When searching by subject, TOPCAT will supply SEE ALSO references connecting you to the correct subject heading to use.

EXAMPLES: charities - wisconsin

LIMITING A SEARCH

You may want to limit a Keyword search at the BEGINNING of a search, when you have specific criteria you need to fulfill: (i.e., you need items from a certain SWITCH library, or published after 2000, etc....)

EXAMPLE: morrison, toni

At the BEGINNING of a Search Using a Keyword Search

You may also limit AFTER you perform any other type of search. This allows you to view your results before restricting how many were retrieved. First perform a search, then select either the LIMIT/SORT or MODIFY SEARCH button found at the top of your TOPCAT screen.

EXAMPLES: charities - wisconsin

Be careful not to LIMIT too soon. Anytime you limit a search you NARROW the amount of total items that can be potentially retrieved. The more limits, the fewer the results. The less limits the greater the results.