

Uncovering UnCover: A Cool Tool for Social Work Research

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A Short History of UnCover

Back in the old days (prior to 1993), social work students (BSW, MSW, Ph.D.) would employ a variety of library tools to complete a literature search. Commonly used tools included: *Social Work Abstracts*, *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, and a wide diversity of online databases that required a degree in library science to use and charged a fee. Social work researchers witnessed a dramatic move into technology when *Social Work Abstracts* produced a CD version. This was an improvement. However, now we have UnCover, which may make all other search mechanisms obsolete

In 1981, the Colorado Alliance of Research libraries (CARL) established a consortium to share resources among its members. Eight years later, CARL allowed non-members to use its database via a modem, but a fee was charged. In addition, users could purchase an actual copy of the article and have it faxed to their home or office. The search and document delivery part of CARL was named UnCover. By 1993, the consortium allowed access to its impressive database for free! The only fee that is charged is for faxing of complete articles and copyright fees, when applicable.

An Evaluation of Social Work Content in UnCover

UnCover contains records describing approximately 17,000 multidisciplinary journals and their contents. Over 5,000 current citations are added daily. UnCover contains brief descriptive information for more than 7,000,000 articles that have appeared since Fall 1988. What about social work periodicals? Table 1 illustrates the Subject Classification lists employed by UnCover. Notice that social work is not included on the list.

Standard social work periodicals are scattered among the subject categories. Although the absence of social work in the categorical listing is distressing to social work researchers, it is not a serious problem, because searches are not conducted by employing the categories. Nevertheless, I made a formal request to have a "Social Work" category included in UnCover's listings.

I compared UnCover's social work content with the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) volume titled *An Author's Guide to Social Work Journals*, which lists 187 journals for social workers. All but 41 of the 187 (22%) are indexed in UnCover. The journals that are found in *An Author's Guide to Social Work Journals* but not listed in UnCover can be found in Table 2. With new journals being regularly added to UnCover, it is likely that social workers will soon see the journals from Table 2 included in the database.

TABLE 1 Subject Classification Lists		
Agriculture and Forestry Animal and Aquaculture Anthropology and Folklore Archeology Architecture Astronomy Automotive and Aeronautics Biology Botany Cardiology Chemistry Dentistry Economics and Banking Education	Engineering English and American Literature Environment and Ecology Fine Arts Genealogy Library Science and Bibliography Material Science Mathematics and Computer Science Medicine Metallurgy and Mining Military and Naval Sciences	Music Nursing Oceanography Pharmacology Philosophy and Psychology Photography Physics Plastics and Polymers Political Science Recreation and Sports Religion Social Sciences Sociology Telecommunications

TABLE 2 Journals (41) Not Included in Uncover	
<p>Alternative Therapies in Clinical Practice American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease British Journal of Psychotherapy British Journal of Social Work Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality Child and Youth Services Child Maltreatment Family Preservation Journal Family Violence and Sexual Assault Bulletin Groupwork Healing Ministry Jewish Social Work Forum Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities Journal of Black Studies Journal of Chemical Dependency Treatment Journal of Child and Adolescent Group Therapy Journal of Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse Journal of Community Practice Journal of Community Social Work Education Journal of Emotional Abuse Journal of Family Ministry</p>	<p>Journal of Family Social Work Journal of Genetic Psychology Journal of Health and Social Policy Journal of Lesbian Studies Journal of Neural-AIDS Journal of Neurovascular Disease Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing Journal of Policy Negotiations, Crisis Management and Suicidology Journal of Prevention and Crisis Intervention Journal of Sexual Aggression Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly Reflections Research in Pharmaceutical Economics Scandinavian Journal of Social Welfare SCI Psychosocial Process Social Work and Christianity Social Work and Social Services Review Special Services in the Schools Student Assistance Journal Women and Health Women and Politics</p>

An additional way to evaluate UnCover is to review the collection of appropriate social work journals that are indexed in UnCover, but that are not listed in NASW's *An Author's Guide to Social Work Journals*. No systematic sampling procedure was employed since there was no vehicle for systematically extracting journals of interest to social work students and researchers. However, in a non-scientific manner, at least 52 journals for which social workers would have interest were found (See Table 3).

TABLE 3 Journals (52) Included in Uncover But Not in Author's Guide	
British Journal of Social Psychology	Social and Economic Studies
British Journal of Sociology	Social and Legal Studies
Journal of Psychotherapy and the Family	Social Behavior and Personality
Journal of Public Health	Social Change
Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences	Social Choice and Welfare
Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology	Social Cognition
Journal of Social and Personal Relationships	Social Development
Journal of Social Behavior and Personality	Social Development Issues
Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless	Social Distress and the Homeless
Journal of Social Policy	Social Indicators Research
Journal of Social Research	Social Justice
Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law	Social Justice Research
Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment	Social Justice Review
Journal of Testing and Evaluation	Social Networks
Nonprofit World	Social Policy and Administration
Psychoanalysis and the Social Sciences	Social Problems
Psychoanalytic Study to the Child	Social Progress
Psychology and Human Development	Social Psychiatry
Public Administration	Social Research
Research in Sociology of Organizations	Social Science Computer Review
Research Policy	Social Security Bulletin
Social and Legal Studies	Social Security Journal
Social Action	Social Welfare
Social Alternatives	Social Work Today
Social Analysis	Social Worker: Le Travailleur Social
Social and Economic Administration	Violence and Victims

The number of journals found in UnCover but lacking in *An Author's Guide to Social Work Journals* clearly outnumbers the journals found in *An Author's Guide to Social Work Journals* but not in UnCover. More simply stated, I find that UnCover offers the most comprehensive database available for social work students and researchers.

Four Connecting Options

Four approaches exist for connecting to UnCover. The first is through a modem by dialing (303) 756-3600. The modem should be set at 19,200 baud, 8N-1. Because of the long distance phone call, this approach is the least desirable. The most desirable approach is through the use of an

academic library's electronic card catalog, which usually has a direct link to UnCover on its menu. Librarians can be very helpful in locating the UnCover option. Some large academic libraries have made special arrangements with UnCover in which only citations for journals that are available in the library will be extracted from the UnCover database. This is good, if the researcher does not want to use the interlibrary loan facilities. Of course, libraries have an option to bypass this feature. Two other options include using the World Wide Web (WWW) or Telnet

The Telnet address for UnCover is: *database.carl.org*. The distinct advantage of using Telnet is that it is much faster than using the WWW. The disadvantage is that the Telnet version is less user friendly. When invoking Telnet, eight screens will appear. Beginners may find these screens intimidating. To directly deal with this intimidating feature, let us examine each screen.

Screen 1: Selecting the Terminal. This screen lists several options. If one does not know the answer, the best reply is "1" (ADM, all) followed by the ENTER key. In a blink of an eye, the second screen will appear.

Screen 2: Ready to Access UnCover. UnCover reminds the user that the command *"/EXIT"* disconnects from the database. Here the user merely needs to press ENTER to continue.

Screen 3: The CARL Menu. This screen lists options for accessing various databases. Although there are several options, the user should press "1" and the ENTER key to invoke UnCover.

Screen 4: UnCover's Password Request. Options are given to enter a password or to press ENTER to use Open Access. Under most circumstances, new users will press the ENTER key. A password is used to limit one's search and to bill for faxing of articles. Most users will not need to have articles faxed, but rather will use interlibrary loan, which is significantly less expensive.

Screen 5: Another UnCover Screen. This screen tells the user that access is allowed at the Open Access Delivery rate. Press ENTER to continue.

Screen 6: Request for Profile. For beginners, a profile is not necessary. Again, press ENTER to go to the next screen.

Screen 7: The Final Explanation of UnCover. This screen explains UnCover's services and gives users the opportunity to create a user profile, again explaining that a profile is not necessary in order to search the UnCover database. A user will quickly learn that when one is confused with UnCover options, merely select ENTER and the next screen will appear. The material found in Screen 7 is an additional explanation of UnCover, for which the best response is the ENTER key.

Screen 8: Welcome to UnCover. The UnCover menu lists various search options: W for word or topic search, N for author search, and B for browse by journal title. Pressing W will invoke a command line to insert a word or words that can be appropriately found in the title and abstract of an article. If the user knows of an author who is renown in a particular area of research, option N is the most appropriate. Option B is extremely helpful for looking at the Tables of Contents of all the journals in UnCover. This option is extremely helpful as a mechanism for selecting a topic for a term paper.

Although the number of screens one invokes via Telnet seems extreme, the Telnet is still faster than the WWW entrance to UnCover. However, the Telnet option has one major speed drawback. Unlike the WWW option, Telnet does not forgive typographical errors. For example, if one types "socail" but meant to type "social," neither the BACKSPACE nor the DELETE key will correct the typo. One must return to the UnCover menu. Thus, poor typists will find the WWW much faster.

To invoke the World Wide Web option, use the following URL: <http://uncweb.carl.org/>

The WWW option is much more user friendly and intuitive than the Telnet one. To invoke UnCover, one must click at "Search the UnCover Database." The request for a password can be ignored. At the top left side of the screen, click on the book icon next to the words "Search UnCover Now." At this point, merely click the search type you desire (keyword, name or author, or journal title browse) and type the words into the space provided. Although BACKSPACE and DELETE function properly for typos, once one clicks ENTER on the screen, the process is slow. The speed is related to the number of users. Therefore, the WWW option is faster at times of day that are usually not busy--such as 4 a.m.

Advantages, Limitations, and Conclusions

Although there are several limitations to UnCover, the advantages are:

- a) Because it is user friendly, one does not need the assistance of a librarian.
- b) UnCover is fast and inexpensive to use.
- c) One can use UnCover from home or the library at any time.
- d) One does not have to retype the citations. They can be cut and pasted to a word processor or emailed to oneself.

The disadvantages include:

- a) The Telnet option does not permit searching by year of publication. (Searching by date is allowed in the WWW option, however, as of Fall 1998.)
- b) On the surface, it appears that UnCover houses limited social work journals, but it includes more social work journals than *Social Work Abstracts*.
- c) During busy times, UnCover is slow. This is especially true of the UnCover Web site.

Without a doubt, UnCover is user friendly, comprehensive, fast, and inexpensive (no charge). For students and researchers, finding citations is a breeze with this cool tool.