Researchers and resources rising to meet environmental challenges

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Abstract
The article explores trends in environmental studies at the university-level and how EBSCO Information Services curates its database resources to meet the needs of students and researchers. The author discusses leading environmental problems and their cross-disciplinary permeance, the influence of international political agreements, and the varying needs of undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and library administrators. The history, content, and value of the GreenFILE and Environment Complete databases are detailed, including the many different subjects they cover (ex. climate change, green building, pollution, environmental protection, forestry, and watersheds.) The author articulates her process for reviewing and selecting scholarly journals to be included in these databases, and shares reasons for why the study of the environment is so important.

Key words: *environmental studies; academic databases; environmental science; sustainability; STEM education.*

Introduction

Fast paced and interdisciplinary, environmental studies is the sun around which policy, social awareness, corporate priorities, and technology orbit. Its presence is immense and its problems urgent. At its core, this branch of science drives humanity toward a greater good, something much bigger than ourselves. According to academic trend reports, over the past 10 years university-level environmental studies programs have grown by an estimated 20% in the United States and Europe due to rising awareness, the appeal of interdisciplinary application to economics, ethics, and policy, increased state and private funding, and emerging career opportunities. There are nearly 3,000 universities across the United States (1) and Europe (2) looking to help address critical environmental issues. A significant theme covered at the 2024 Charleston Conference, an annual event for academic libraries and publishers held in South Carolina, USA, was sustainable practices and how to make libraries more environmentally friendly. Simply put, there is a big problem to solve out there, and no shortage of people rising to the challenge.

Trends

Today's top trends in environmental studies won't be the same as tomorrow's, and at EBSCO Information Services (EBSCO), a leading research database provider, we are committed to keeping up with what researchers study the most by indexing the most authoritative, informative, and high quality journals from around the world that report on the most pressing and emerging issues:

1. the adaptation of infrastructure and ecosystems in response to climate change;
2. the technology and impact of renewable energy;
3. waste management and the toxicity of single-use plastics;
4. the loss of land and marine biodiversity and ocean conservation;
5. environmental law, community inequalities, and policy research;
6. sustainable practices, water management, and agriculture;
7. investments in technology such as artificial intelligence and carbon containment;
8. human health and the environmental impact on illness.

International environmental agreements with commitments to tackle climate change and preserve the oceans and forests, such as the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have broadly influenced universities, compa-

nies, and organizations to create new priorities or evaluate existing ones to encourage progressive environmental engagement. SDGs that directly relate to the environment include n. 4 Quality education, n. 6 Clean water and sanitation, n. 7 Affordable and clean energy, n. 9 Industry, innovation, and infrastructure, n. 11 Sustainable cities and communities, n. 12 Responsible consumption and production, n. 13 Climate action, n. 14 Life below water, and n.15 Life on land (3). Many university programs mirror these goals if not link directly to them from their websites. Among its own environmental commitments, EBSCO delivers most consistently and visibly on n. 4, believing that the key to change is education, readily accessible information, and knowledge for all. To help researchers meet these and other goals, EBSCO provides subject-specific databases such as *GreenFILE* and *Environment Complete*.

GreenFILE

GreenFILE is a multidisciplinary bibliographic database that was released in 2007 as a free resource to the library community to find scholarly and popular literature on environmental issues. Adopted quickly by liberal arts colleges, the index of journals, magazines, books, reports, trade publications, and case studies specifically highlights human-environment interaction (HEI). Today, *GreenFILE* remains widely available and provides entry points for research from 270 publishers across twenty-five countries covering climate change, green building, pollution, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, recycling, and more. It indexes about 800 journals, as well as monographs, and currently comprises more than 1,3 million records. Researchers can access *GreenFILE* at www.greeninfoonline.com (*Figure 1*)
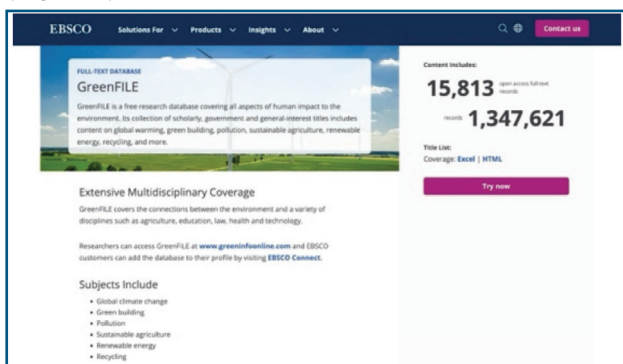

Fig. 1. *Screenshot of GreenFILE product page.*

Environment Complete

Following closely on the heels of *GreenFILE*, we released *Environment Complete* in late 2008 to serve libraries and universities with burgeoning environmental programs (*Figure 2*). Today, with 1.6 million full-text records, it is a leading database providing hundreds of top environmental journals covering climate change, environmental protection, watersheds, forests and forestry, habitats, and more. It includes over seven hundred active, peer reviewed scholarly journals, and all its content is indexed and interconnected via a dedicated proprietary thesaurus and subject hierarchy of 16,896 preferred terms. With its high-quality subject indexing, EBSCO continues to break down barriers to information through Enhanced Search Precision (ESP) mapping, bridging the gap between content and end users through inclusion of natural language, and supporting all learning types through textual and visual subject browse and information literacy training through subject access points in more than 30 languages.

Environment Complete Active full-text journals and magazines	TOTAL
Active full-text journals and magazines	838
Active full-text, peer-reviewed journals	735
Active full-text, peer-reviewed journals with no embargo	412
Active full-text journals indexed in Web of Science or Scopus	626

Fig. 2. *Environment Complete product details.*

Product development

As a Senior Product Manager, dozens of serial publications come across my desk weekly. I review each to make sure they meet our standards for inclusion in *Environment Complete*, *GreenFILE*, and other databases. I consider the publication's overall mission, quality, longevity, peer review process, the reputation of the publisher, and the mechanics of various research journeys. I mindfully accept (or reject) publications that best serve the needs of EBSCO's database end users by referencing a needs-based framework that strives to differentiate user groups based on an understanding of

the underlying drivers or needs behind a user's behaviors or attitudes. For example, a university undergraduate may find research overwhelming and needs content and functionality that allows him to familiarize himself with a topic, find relevant sources, and complete his assignment, whereas a graduate student may be looking to create a publishable, scholarly work and is willing to put in a higher degree of effort ¬her search strategies becoming more finely honed as she looks to support her thesis. I consider the needs of faculty, especially in their work to support interdisciplinary curriculum development in environmental studies and beyond. Not to be forgotten are the library administrators who use databases and publications for distinct reasons, such as assessing new offerings, configuring library resources, and acquiring and activating new content while riding the wave of growing campus demands and shrinking staff, an ever-ebbing tide.

Conclusion

Last spring, my young daughter chose to pick up all the litter from our neighborhood playground – by herself. As her sneakered feet pattered back and forth across the mulch, she stuffed coffee cups, candy wrappers, and a plastic fork into the trashcan, and fished a cardboard box out of the bushes, the weight and shape of it too cumbersome for her little body. "Why do people litter? It's bad for Mother Earth", she huffed, determined to get the job done. A future environmentalist, perhaps. To researchers who work passionately (and the librarians and faculty who support them) to address extreme weather conditions, rising sea levels, species extinction, food security, water scarcity, health risks, economic disruptions, growing geopolitical tensions, and fight irreversible cryospheric tipping points, EBSCO will provide the modern platform and authoritative resources you can trust, backed by globally respected practices and a commitment to aid the flow of information. So, why study the environment? Because the stakes are too high not to.

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