Using LexisNexis

LexisNexis Academic is a database that contains full-text, news articles from all over the world. It primarily relies on newspapers, and hence you tend to get many more hits than are really useful. However, that said, it can give you a good “view” of what’s up with a certain topic.

There is also a second, separate LexisNexis service known as LexisNexis Congressional (see details at the end of this document), which is a cool database because it lets you look at Congressional documents about the latest bills and pending legislation.

To access either of these, go to the Helmke database page (http://www.lib.ipfw.edu/623.0.html) and go down to the “L”s.

LexisNexis (Academic), which searches the news, looks like this, and is easy to use:

Just type your search phrase in and press “Search.”

Here’s what I got when I typed in “standardized testing.”
This turned out to be a pretty decent search, as the first two articles on the list are LONG — anything under 1,000 words is generally just a brief news article, letter to the editor, or editorial and not in depth, whereas something 2,000 – 3,000 plus words is likely an in-depth piece worth using.

Citing LexisNexis articles is tricky, because you have to sort out the information and because the articles are sometimes not really articles — they can be TV shows, etc.

In general, you will do it like this:

- Author's name (if not available, use the article title as the first part of the citation)
- Article Title
- Publication Name
- Publication Date
- Page Number/Range
- Database Name
- Name of the library where service was accessed
- Name of the town/city where service was accessed
- Date of Access
- URL of the service (but not the whole URL for the article, since those are very long and won't be able to be re-used by someone trying to retrieve the information)

All you can ever do is use the information that you can find — if you can't find it, you can't use it. So, item one above, becomes,

And to refer to this within the body of your paper, you’d have to do: (“The Pros and Cons”) without a page number and without an author, because no author is given and a show doesn’t really have page numbers.

If you are doing topics that are presently the subject of legislation (abortion, gun control, stem cell research, gay-marriages, hate crimes, campus speech codes, affirmative action, etc.), then LexisNexis Congressional is for you.

Go back to the Helmke database index (http://www.lib.ipfw.edu/623.0.html) and go down to the “L”s. The search page looks like this:

The links and descriptions are pretty self-explanatory. But this one sure looks helpful.