MLA Citations from Electronic Databases

This is not a fun topic for anyone but it need not be as hard as it seems at times.

Purdue has a great site that explains it all pretty well, and which will save you from having to buy a handbook:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html

The info about citing books and chapters or essays in books is pretty straightforward, and you just have to teach it to yourself if you don’t already know it.

However, this class stresses academic databases, and they are not quite so easy to cite; by the same token, all the info you need is easily available. For example, after I clicked on the “abstract” line for this article, you can see the citing info right here:

The info we need includes the author’s name, the article’s name, the journal that published the article, the volume and issue of the publication, the date of the publication, the pages of the article, which database you used, when you accessed that database, and a very short form of the URL, in that order.
You also need the library and city of access, which are placed right before the date of access. So, for the above article, the citation would look like this:


Now notice that I did a couple of things here. First of all, I found the page range of the article by taking the starting page number of the article (see illustration above) and adding the total number of pages (also above) to that figure. That’s pretty simple – don’t forget to do it.

Secondly, I indented the 2nd and 3rd and 4th lines of the citation one-half inch. You just pull these two little tabs over one-half inch to the right to accomplish that:

Now, there is one other issues that arises as you write your paper – how to cite page numbers from this article. If you are lucky enough to be able to print it as a “pdf” document, it comes with real live page numbers!! However, if as is the case with this article, it comes only as “HTML Full Text,” then you will have to GUESS at the page numbers. It’s not that hard – say if the quote you want to use comes about half way through your printed document, and you know the article began on page 83 and ended on page 87, then “85” is as good a page number as any!!

So, don’t stress over this, but do work at getting it right – follow the correct order, don’t use “vol.” and “issue” (Vol. 31 Issue 13 becomes 36.12), and keep your URL very short. That’s it – it’s not rocket science!!

Sometimes Microsoft Word insists on automatically making a link out of your URL. You can highlight it and go click on the little “earth link” in the menu bar to open a dialog box that will let you get rid of the link, or you can just live with it. I’m only asking that you learn this stuff and know how to find out how to do it, not that you do it 100 percent perfectly.