

- ◆ Try to find out how big the database is. How many entries, or records, does the database contain? What does this mean?
- ◆ What types of materials are included as sources in the database? (Books, book chapters, journal articles, magazine articles, newspaper articles, conference proceedings, patents, web sites, government publications, and so on.)
- ◆ How many different sources does the database index? Give an example of two or three titles.
- ◆ What time period or years does the database cover? What does this mean?
- ◆ Are the sources indexed in the database all English-language sources? If not, what other languages are included?
- ◆ Does the database provide the full text or content of the articles it indexes? If so, does it provide the full text for all articles indexed?
- ◆ If the database does not provide full text, then what does it give you? Explain and describe.
- ◆ How often is the database updated? (That is, how often are new records added.)

PART TWO: DATABASE USABILITY

(Spend up to 20 minutes discovering this information.)

- ◆ Find the database's "Help" or "User Guide" screens. How do they work? What do they include? Is the help easy or difficult to understand? Do you think it is helpful? What is most helpful in the help section?
- ◆ What kind of search does the database open with? (What is the default search? Subject? Keyword? Relevance?)
- ◆ Does the database use a "controlled vocabulary?" (Some database providers assign specific subject headings for topical searches.) Is there a Subject Thesaurus or a Subject Terms list?
- ◆ Find out and be able to explain what it is and demonstrate how to use it. How easy is it to use?
- ◆ How does one search this database?
- ◆ Is it user-friendly or difficult to figure out?
- ◆ By what access points does the database allow you to search?
- ◆ Be able to demonstrate and describe more than one method for searching the database.
- ◆ Does the database offer advanced search mechanisms? Be able to demonstrate and describe any.
- ◆ What fields are included in the full record for an item? Show us a record and identify the fields.
- ◆ Does the database offer Boolean searching? Be able to demonstrate how to set up a Boolean search.
- ◆ Explain all of the different ways that information from the database can be retrieved (for example, by marking records, reformatting records, printing records, e-mailing records, and saving records to disk).

In preparation for your presentation, be sure to take clear and comprehensive notes while you are in the database discovery mode. For example, write down the path to any help screens you might want to show the class. Note any searches you did that would be especially useful in demonstrating the database's features.