Comparative Analysis of SPORTDiscus with Full Text and Gale Health and Wellness

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Comparative Analysis and Acquisition Recommendation: Allied Health Sciences Database

The Collection Development Committee at Golden Health Sciences University Library commissioned this database evaluation report to inform an acquisition decision for the next fiscal year. We are committed to fiscal responsibility and selecting resources that provide the highest value to our students and faculty. Each year, we evaluate our collection and purchase database subscriptions to maintain or expand access to electronic resources within strict financial limits. Our committee has determined that we can add one subscription and has identified two candidate electronic resources: SPORTDiscus with Full Text (accessed through EBSCO) and Gale Health and Wellness (accessed through Gale/Cengage). The decision criteria are relevance to our programs, depth of coverage, level of specialization, and value within our financial limits.

Our library serves as the central information hub for Golden Health Sciences University, supporting undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in medicine, nursing, physical therapy, athletic training, and other allied health disciplines. The Golden Health Sciences University Library tailors its specialized clinical collections to a core of about 3,200 full-time health sciences students across these disciplines. Our primary health sciences portfolio already comprises essential foundational resources; however, our current collection gap lies in specialized literature that connects clinical care with exercise science, rehabilitation, and patient health literacy.

SPORTDiscus with Full Text

SPORTDiscus with Full Text (SPORTDiscus) is a specialized database indexing sports medicine, exercise physiology, kinesiology, physical therapy, biomechanics, and athletic training. It supports scholarly research through bibliographic indexing and direct full-text access to 423+ active peer-reviewed journals, books, and dissertations. The database offers deep coverage of rehabilitation, sports injuries, and occupational health, including key titles like the *American*

Journal of Sports Medicine. SPORTDiscus uses Enhanced Subject Precision and MeSH-compatible taxonomies, helping researchers run complex searches with Boolean operators for systematic reviews. Institutionally, SPORTDiscus fills a gap for allied health programs by providing specialized coverage of human movement that general medical indexes lack. It primarily serves upper-division undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty in kinesiology and physical therapy.

Gale Health and Wellness

Gale Health and Wellness delivers access to authoritative health information on medical conditions, consumer health, mental health, and alternative therapies for researchers at all levels. The platform integrates medical reference monographs alongside magazines, newspapers, periodicals, multimedia, and selected scholarly journals across diagnostics, drugs, and treatments. It values accessibility through visual discovery, ReadSpeaker text-to-speech, 60+ language translations, built-in citation tools, and direct export workflows to Google Workspace and Microsoft 365, enabling continuous navigation without complicated taxonomies. In academic settings, it serves lower-division undergraduates, pre-nursing students, and consumer health researchers for broad topic discovery rather than specialized clinical research.

Evaluation Criteria

Utilizing an eight-point evaluation rubric (Scope, Quality of Content, Accuracy, Currency, Arrangement, Ease of Use, Authority, and Appropriateness), this report establishes a transparent, data-informed rationale for our final recommendation. We systematically evaluated both databases against each criterion to assess their fit for the Golden Health Sciences University Library collection. The following subsections outline our findings across each rubric category.

Scope

SPORTDiscus focuses on sports, exercise science, fitness, and related health fields. According to EBSCO Information Services, its coverage includes athletic training, coaching, consumer health, exercise science, health education, kinesiology, nutrition, physical fitness, sports psychology, sports injuries, rehabilitation, and sports management. The database provides access to 477 active full-text journals and magazines, including 423 peer-reviewed journals. Although the database supports subject access in more than 30 languages, the advanced search interface reviewed offered a language limiter with six options.

A search for *postpartum exercise* returned 94 results, including 33 full-text results and 33 peer-reviewed, with 17 matching both criteria. A search for *concussion management* returned 493 results, including 259 full-text and 384 peer-reviewed, with 208 matching both criteria. These results suggest stronger coverage of *concussion management* than *postpartum exercise*, consistent with the database's sports and exercise focus. EBSCO's publication coverage is international, including journals from countries such as Australia, Spain, Sweden, Japan, and South Africa. Coverage dates vary by publication, dating back to 1975 to the present.

Gale Health and Wellness covers a broader range of health topics, including community health, diseases and conditions, drugs, mental health, diagnostic tests, and treatments (Gale, n.d.-b). Its content includes reference materials, magazines, news, academic journals, and multimedia. Gale states that content can be translated into more than 60 languages, although this does not mean the original publications are available in all of them. Its advanced search interface offers a Spanish limiter but no general language filter. A search for *postpartum exercise* returned 23 results that were both peer-reviewed and full text. For *concussion management*, 104 were both peer-reviewed and full text. The concussion search returned more results, particularly in news and academic journals, while both searches provided academic content.

Both databases provide health related information. SPORTDiscus offers specialized coverage in sports and related fields, while Gale provides a wider range of health information and general medical topics.

Quality of Content

SPORTDiscus is a specialized database for sports, exercise science, and sports medicine. EBSCO describes it as “an essential tool for health professionals and researchers studying fitness, health, and sports” (EBSCO, n.d.). Its scholarly vocabulary is “curated by subject matter experts,” and its Enhanced Subject Precision (ESP) mapping helps connect users with relevant research. These features support information discovery in specialized areas such as athletic training, physical therapy, sports injuries, and rehabilitation. The database includes full-text scholarly journals and magazines, although not every indexed publication is available in full text. SPORTDiscus is particularly useful for academic research requiring specialized literature on sports and exercise.

Gale Health and Wellness provides full-text scholarly medical journals alongside reference works, magazines, news articles, and multimedia resources. Its broad coverage includes symptoms, diagnoses, diseases, treatments, and general health concerns, making it useful for academic research and general health education. The variety of publication types also allows users to explore a topic through background information, news coverage, and scholarly research. Gale describes its content as authoritative, and the *peer-reviewed* filter helps identify scholarly articles suitable for academic assignments, while the *full-text* filter helps locate articles that can be read in their entirety. Because the database includes different publication types, users should recognize that not all sources follow the same editorial standards. Overall, Gale offers a broad range of health information and formats, making it a useful resource for researching health topics from general and academic perspectives.

Accuracy

The accuracy of the content present in a database can be done by “comparing the work to other works on the same topic.” (Cassell & Hiremath, 2023, p. 367) Searches using the term “ACL Rehabilitation” on SPORTDiscus yield 172 articles with most results from peer-reviewed journals and by default is listed by relevance. Comparing the topmost result with other results shows that the subject terms and/or author-supplied keywords in the article’s metadata overlap with each other thereby substantiating the accuracy of its search results. This metadata is listed under the “Details” tab of each article providing information on the source, document type, author affiliations, full text word count and more in addition to the subject terms and author-supplied keywords.

The advanced search function allows for users to either search on all of the metadata fields cumulatively or on each individual metadata field like the article’s ISSN. These searches can be coupled together with boolean operators for further accuracy of search results. Further filtering is provided by the “Filters” tab where users can limit results by choosing from a standard set of pre-filled options based on parameters like “Country” or “Document Type”. Additionally, users can also modify the search mode, choosing from options such as “Proximity”, where search terms are searched in proximity to each other, each term in the search has to be separated by five words or less in the same metadata field, or “Find all my search terms” where the boolean operator AND is applied in between every search term (EBSCO Connect, 2026).

The EBSCO search interface provides the option to use an AI-assisted search where users can pose questions that would be interpreted into a search but this seems to be less accurate than a manual search. Using the phrase “articles on ACL rehabilitation” yielded only 157 search results, fewer than the results yielded when simply “ACL Rehabilitation” was searched on all fields in “Proximity” mode.

Using the same “ACL Rehabilitation” term on Gale Health and Wellness yields results divided by content type such as “Magazines”, “News” or “Academic Journals”, with 14 results for “Magazines”, 119 for “News”, and 61 for “Academic Journals”. There are options to limit the

search results to each specific content type as well. Comparing the topmost resulting article of the “Academic Journals” content type with other articles shows that the terms under the “Related Subjects” heading overlap with each other pointing to the accuracy of its search function. There is no central way of seeing the metadata of each article but fields like “Publisher” and “Date” are present above each article and in the advanced search function the fields can be searched upon. Similar to the search function of SPORTDiscus, these field searches can be combined together with boolean operators and the overall search limited by parameters like “Document Type” or if a document contains images. However compared to SPORTDiscus, there is no standard set of pre-filled options for some of these search limiters which might be an obstacle if the user is unaware of the specific word to use and there are no options to filter by parameters like “Country” or “Publication Type”. Search modes are also omitted in Gale Health and Wellness, users can instead manually enter operators such as boolean, proximity or nesting and characters like wildcard characters or quotation marks to create more targeted search terms.

Currency

SPORTDiscus covers journals dating back from 1985 and provides access to 651 active indexed and abstracted journals (EBSCO, n.d.). Its advanced search function allows for filtering based on publication date with options to select showing results over the past 12 months, 5 years or 10 years or by providing a date range. The currency of a database can be determined by “checking to see if recent information on a specific topic is included in the work and by checking the dates of resources cited.” (Cassell & Hiremath, 2023) Results for articles on the subject, “Abdominal muscle injuries”, yielded 14 articles with options to list it from newest to oldest or vice versa. With the “Date newest” option selected, the topmost article was an article published in the International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy in 2026 denoting the recency of information in the work. The resources cited for this article could also be listed by newest

published citation to oldest or vice versa, with the most recent published citation being from July 2023 further validating recency.

Gale Health and Wellness covers material from the 1980s to now with continuous daily updates for news, periodical and scholarly publications. Its advanced search function allows users to limit searches based on before, on and after a certain publication date or in between two dates. Using the same “Abdominal muscle injuries” search term on Gale Health and Wellness yielded 2 reference articles, 1 magazine article, 15 news articles and 4 articles from academic journals with options to list it from newest to oldest or vice versa upon selecting the content type. The results could be further filtered by providing a custom date range or by selecting preset options to view results over the past week, month or year. With the “Newest” option selected, the topmost article was an article published in July 2026 and its most recent cited reference was from 2021 proving the recency of information present for the topic.

Both databases cover material from the 1980s on but Gale Health and Wellness explicitly performs continuous daily updates to ensure their serial content is up to date while it is not conclusive if SPORTDiscus does the same.

Arrangement

SPORTDiscus features an uncluttered layout with a global header, including options like *Browse by* and *Research tools*, that maintains consistent navigation throughout the research process. By having these controls at the top with search fields below, the platform is "organized and indexed in such a way as to facilitate easy access" for users (Cassell & Hiremath, 2023, p. 368). Under the search bars are *Filters*, *Search options*, *Publications*, and *Subjects* tabs. *Subjects* opens a thesaurus/subject term index, helping to browse or search for the exact, official subject terms. This helps users “to easily find the information" (Cassell & Hiremath, 2023, p. 368) because researchers can easily look up standard terms instead of potentially struggling with free-text keywords. SPORTDiscus uses cross-references by displaying hyperlinked subject

tags, like *ankle injuries* for an ankle sprain search, that redirect users to all articles indexed under that topic. *More like this* offers cross-references metadata to connect to related studies.

Gale Health and Wellness has a simple layout that makes navigation easy. At the top, there is a search box along with *Browse Topics*, *Title List*, and *Search History*. *Browse Topics* opens the subject directory, allowing researchers to explore or select the exact topic categories. Below, the main page organizes major health topics into neat boxes. Placing search controls above topic boxes keeps the page clean and organized. Gale Health and Wellness also provides cross-references via sidebar tools on the search results page. When searching *ankle sprains*, for example, users can open the *Subjects* filter to go to related headings or use the visual *Topic Finde*r to explore sub-topics. Gale Health and Wellness automatically cross-references content by categorizing results into distinct tabs, such as *Videos*, *Images*, and *News*, allowing researchers to explore all available formats. Overall, Gale Health and Wellness promotes beginner-friendly exploration, while SPORTDiscus targets precise academic indexing.

SPORTDiscus presents search results in a structured list designed to make content easy to scan. Total result counts and sorting options appear at the top, while individual entry cards highlight search terms in yellow across titles, summaries, and subject tags. Each item includes labels, like *Peer-Reviewed*, *Full-Text Access* buttons, and a *Multimedia assets* section, keeping the output organized and effortless to evaluate. Gale Health and Wellness presents search results in an easy-to-scan layout grouped by content-type headers, like *Reference*, *Magazines*, and *Academic Journals*, or format filtering. Individual entries display neatly with bold titles, publication details, and peer-reviewed badges, letting researchers evaluate relevance at a glance. Overall, Gale Health and Wellness emphasizes rapid, format-based scanning, whereas SPORTDiscus targets precise academic analysis.

For browsing, SPORTDiscus features a *Browse by* drop-down, offering access to *Publications* and *Subjects*. The database provides links for *Basic search* and a specialized *Population, Problem, or Patient, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome, Time, or Type* (*PICOT)*

clinical framework, alongside *Research tools*. By placing these tools in neat drop-downs, SPORTDiscus provides an "intelligible interface" that simplifies navigation (Cassell & Hiremath, 2023, p. 368). Although it lacks a *Help* link, its straightforward menu still guides users. Gale Health and Wellness makes browsing easy and offers clear help tools. Clicking *Browse Topics* at the top opens an A-to-Z list with *UPDATED!* labels, while *Topics of Interest* pairs images with short summaries. A *Help* link in the footer gives users easy access to support. While Gale Health and Wellness offers a visual, consumer-friendly browsing experience with a prominent *Help* link, SPORTDiscus relies on structured drop-down indices and specialized frameworks designed for scholarly navigation.

Ease of Use

For ease of use, SPORTDiscus proves to be "easy to search" by demonstrating "how quickly it responds to commands and queries" during execution (Cassell & Hiremath, 2023, p. 368). The database offers "both basic and advanced search capabilities," featuring multi-row input fields designed to "accept Boolean operators" with field selectors for titles, abstracts, subject terms, and author keywords (Cassell & Hiremath, 2023, p. 368). Users can easily refine searches beforehand using filters like *Full-Text* and *Peer-Reviewed*. SPORTDiscus is browsable because it provides top-level publication and subject lists, plus a *PICOT* tool for clinical queries. Gale Health and Wellness is easy to search with fast response times. Starting with a single search box on the home page, users must click *Advanced Search* to access multi-row fields supporting Boolean operators and pre-filters like *Full-Text* and *Peer-Reviewed*. Browsing is easy with the A-to-Z topic index, while a footer *Help* link provides user support. While both platforms offer fast, Boolean-capable search, SPORTDiscus builds advanced controls directly into its main interface for immediate precision, whereas Gale Health and Wellness has a simple home page that requires extra navigation.

Authority

Gale Health and Wellness aims to “provide learners with powerful search tools to narrow results and deliver the reliable, timely content they need to be successful researchers” (n.d.). The database itself is part of the Cengage Group, which has been around for over 65 years. In that time frame, Gale has prided itself on being a “trusted publisher and aggregator of information” (n.d.). Within Gale Health and Wellness there are a variety of source types for users to select from. Notable organizations such as the Journal of Pain Research, and BMC Sports Science, Medicine and Rehabilitation are also featured. In addition to having a variety of sources available, the Gale Health and Wellness database includes peer reviewed sources. Further strengthening the database's authority by providing users with sources that have been evaluated by experts in medical and health related fields. Authors in this database include doctors from their own fields, as well as researchers who are a part of independent organizations. Publishers range from the Journal of Medical Case Reports and the Washington Post.

SPORTDiscus is part of the EBSCOhost family and prides itself on its “rigorous curation and indexing of open access (OA) journals (n.d.). Sources in this database must undergo validity check before even being allowed as a source in the SPORTDiscus database. EBSCO has a long history of working with information institutions and has been around since 1944. EBSCO offers users over 540 peer reviewed journals, some of which include the American Journal of Sports Medicine and the Journal of Sport Rehabilitation. Given the wide variety of subjects this database covers, authors and publishing information in this database was extensive. Including respective doctors who practice in various medical fields and researchers. Publishers range from Active Woman Canada to the Video Journal of Sports Medicine. A major differentiator between SPORTDiscus is the availability to provide users with active full text journals, allowing users to access over 400 that are not available in any version of EBSCO’s Academic Search databases (n.d.).

Appropriateness

The user population for Gale Health and Wellness would be catered to users who have general health questions or are curious about certain subjects within the medical field. Gale advertises the database as a place for users to find answers they might not “feel comfortable asking doctors" and a database to browse “through current topics of interest” (2019). Allowing the information needs of the user to be very surface level or requiring extensive research given the subject. As for SPORTDiscus the user population it would best be suited for would be students or users who are a part of an academic institution such as a university. Specifically those that are pursuing careers centered around sports medicine and fields that heavily involve exercise science. The information needs of users who use SPORTDiscus will more likely be aligned with users looking for information on research topics that are prevalent within exercise, sports, and training. Budget considerations for both databases would be to consider that Gale Health and Wellness and SPORTDiscus are both proprietary databases, which would require the purchasing of a license in order for students of Golden Health Sciences University. Pricing information is not publicly available and would require a quote from vendors to determine ultimate cost.

Conclusion and Recommendation

After evaluating SPORTDiscus and Gale Health and Wellness against all eight criteria, the Collection Development Committee recommends purchasing SPORTDiscus with Full Text for the approaching fiscal year. Table 3 summarizes the evidence behind this recommendation.

Table 3

Decision Matrix Comparing SPORTDiscus With Full Text and Gale Health and Wellness

Criterion	SPORTDiscus Evidence	Gale Health and Wellness Evidence	Similarity/Difference	Why It Matters
Scope	Sports medicine and rehabilitation; 208 full-text, peer-reviewed concussion results	Broad general health; 104 full-text, peer-reviewed concussion results	Gale Health and Wellness is broader; SPORTDiscus is deeper	Matches our priority area

Quality of Content	Peer-reviewed; expert-curated indexing	Journals mixed with news and magazines	SPORTDiscus is more scholarly	Advanced users need peer-reviewed evidence
Accuracy	172 ACL results; full metadata and preset filters	61 ACL journal results; no central metadata view; fewer preset filters	Both consistent; SPORTDiscus more precise	Easier to verify and refine results
Currency	Journals from 1985; newest result 2026	1980s to present; daily updates; newest result July 2026	Both current; Gale Health and Wellness updates more often	Both meet recency needs
Arrangement	Thesaurus, subject tags, PICOT framework	A-to-Z browsing, format groups, Help link	Precision vs. browsing	Supports evidence-based practice
Ease of Use	Advanced search on main screen	Advanced search one click away	Both fast and Boolean-capable	Fewer steps for precise searches
Authority	EBSCO (since 1944); 1,008,885 peer-reviewed sources	Gale/Cengage (65+ years); 1,558,883 peer-reviewed sources	Both credible	Does not decide the choice
Appropriateness	College and university researchers	Users with general health questions	Different audiences	Fits our health sciences students

Both databases have similar strengths. They come from long-established providers, offer full-text, peer-reviewed content that users can filter, and support fast, Boolean-capable searches. Each one is also a proprietary database that requires a purchased license. Subscription pricing is negotiated individually with institutions and is not publicly available. As a result, this recommendation is based on the evaluation criteria, and a final purchasing decision would require obtaining quotes from both vendors.

Where they differ most concerns their focus and audience. SPORTDiscus offers depth in sports medicine, exercise science, and rehabilitation. As an example, for concussion management, it returned twice as many full-text, peer-reviewed results as Gale Health and Wellness (208 compared with 104). Gale Health and Wellness offers breadth across general health, but much of its volume comes from news and magazines written for general readers, and its interface favors beginner-friendly browsing over precise scholarly searching. Both were accurate and current in our test searches, but SPORTDiscus had fuller metadata and more

preset filters. SPORTDiscus is designed for college and university researchers, while Gale Health and Wellness is aimed at users with general health questions. For these reasons, SPORTDiscus best fills our collection gap in specialized literature that bridges clinical care with exercise science and rehabilitation.

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